EXCLUSIVE: Patrick Watts Q&A

Tin-top hero and headline-maker tackles the readers' questions P14

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

MOTORSPORT NEWS

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Review response strong enough to herald new partnership with Forestry England going forward

RALLY SET TO BURST BACK INTO ENGLISH FORESTS

Rally cars set for forests' return

By Luke Barry

The forests of England will once again be alive to the sight and sounds of rally cars as Forestry England has concluded its review into the use of motorsport on its land.

The 1700 responses to that review, which was launched in September 2020, have gone a long way to convincing Forestry England that English forests and motorsport go hand-in-hand.

A long-term plan will now be devised where Forestry England will work with its stakeholders, such as Motorsport UK, to create a more sustainable future.

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers said: "For decades the nation's forests have hosted a wide variety of motorsport, from international rallies to grassroots entry-level club events, and everything in between. Our members have a deep respect for the unique nature of the forest stages and we are committed to playing our part in their preservation.

"We are fully dedicated to ensuring the long-term future of motorsport on the nation's forestry estate through this crucial partnership."

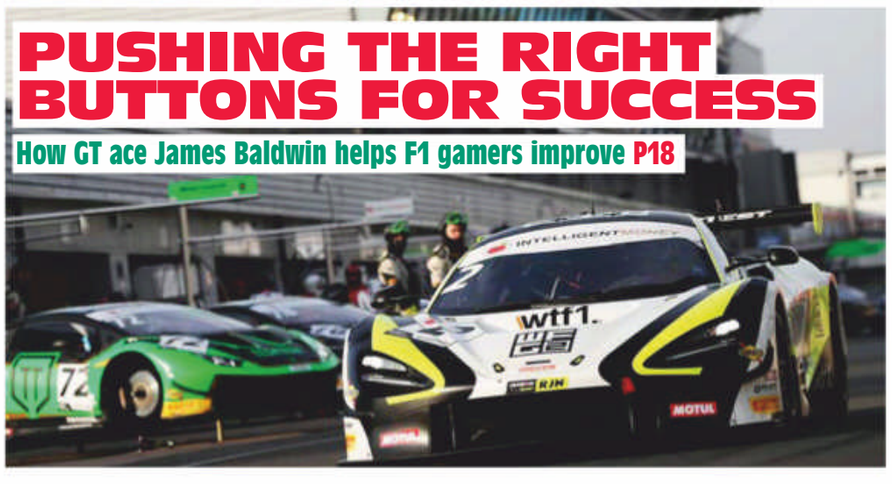
Full story, p8

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT MOTORSPORT NEWS

INSIGHT

PUSHING THE RIGHT BUTTONS FOR SUCCESS

How GT ace James Baldwin helps F1 gamers improve P18



ANALYSIS

EL MATADOR ALONSO'S FRESH CHALLENGE

How Spaniard's third spell at Renault happened P20

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COMMENT

Photo: Chicane Media, Motorsport Images, Paul Lawrence

The English forests will once again echo to the sounds of national rally competitors

SOME CHEER FOR RALLYING

Forest rallying has perhaps been hit hardest in motorsport throughout the global health pandemic and was desperate for some good news. Finally, this week, it seems to have had a hearty slap on the back from Forestry England, which has given a resounding thumbs up to the discipline.

The result of its review into the use of its estates for motorsport was by no means a given. Just because rallying has a heritage in between the trees in this country, that was no guarantee of a future along the same lines. But the rally community responded in its droves to let the governors know that forest events were the lifeblood of rallying in this country and the authorities have listened.

There are many examples when bureaucrats have been urged to be sympathetic and have gone in totally the opposite direction. Thank goodness this was not one of those occasions.

The work doesn't stop here though. As Forestry England has rightly pointed out, there needs to be a sustainable future. It has said that it needs to understand motorsport better to maintain its position through the trees, and it also hopes that a great appreciation of the discipline might even open rallying up to some fresh audiences.

Crucially, though, Forestry England has also said that both it and the rallying community needs to look at ways of reducing the environmental footprint of the events it permits.

That might make some hard-core motorsport folk shudder, but it is a reality of modern-day competition. It is an aspect that both organisers and competitors will have to take seriously to make sure that the forests remain open for action in the years to come. The answer could very well be in the hands of those already in the service park.

Elsewhere in Motorsport News this week, our question-and-answer subject is former British Touring Car Championship battler Patrick Watts. Although the charismatic racer knocked hard on the door of a victory, it never quite happened for him or Peugeot (or Mazda).

Deputy editor Graham Keilloh looks at how online gaming and training is creating a new breed of competitor, while Scott Mitchell takes an in-depth look at the prospects for Fernando Alonso's 2021 grand prix return. Also, reporter Luke Barry reflects on 10 of the best wins (among a total of 50) from multiple WRC champion Sebastien Ogier

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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

Gasly gets Covid
AlphaTauri Formula 1 driver Pierre Gasly is recovering from contracting Covid and has said he is continuing his preparations for the 2021 season by training in isolation. The Italian Grand Prix winner, 24, is the sixth grand prix driver to contract the virus following Lewis Hamilton, Sergio Perez, Lance Stroll, Charles Leclerc and Lando Norris.

F1's American dream
Formula 1 CEO Stefano Domenicali says grand prix chiefs could look to expand its presence in the United States in the future. Nascent plans to host a race in Miami have yet to race fruition but Domenicali says the US could expand its F1 footprint. He said: "I think that in the next couple of months we will decide what there will be in terms of possible discussion with regard to [America], and eventual rotation or stabilising with two [grands prix] that are fixed. It's a work in progress."

Launch control
Mercedes has confirmed that it will launch its new Mercedes F1 machine, named the W12 E Performance, on March 2 in a digital event. AlphaTauri will take the wraps off its AT02 on February 19, while Williams will reveal its new FW43B machine on March 5.

Grosjean for IndyCar
Formula 1 refugee Romain Grosjean has signed to drive for Dale Coyne Racing in IndyCar this season. The 34-year-old will contest the 13 road course events but will skip the ovals, including the Indy 500. He said: "I had different options in front of me for this coming season and choosing to go IndyCar racing was definitively my favourite one. I am not ready for the ovals yet though."

Correa makes return
American Juan Manuel Correa will make a return to racing this season in FIA Formula 3 after recovering from horrific injuries sustained at Spa in Formula 2 in 2019. He was involved in the accident that claimed the life of Anthoine Hubert. Correa suffered severe leg injuries in the crash. He will make his comeback in 2021 with the ART squad.

Ferrari for Albon
Red Bull has confirmed further details of its 2021 DTM programme that will include ousted Formula 1 driver Alex Albon. The energy drinks concern will support two AF Corse-run Ferrari 488 GT3 EVOs for Albon, Liam Lawson and Nick Cassidy. Albon will dovetail his development and reserve role with the Red Bull F1 team with his DTM outings, and Cassidy will share the car when the British-born Thai is occupied elsewhere.

SATURDAY F1 SPRINT RACE UNDER CONSIDERATION THIS SEASON

New boss Stefano Domenicali says a major change is on the horizon in grand prix racing

Photos: Motorsport Images, Jakob Ebrey, Mike Hills Speed Images

The teams are being consulted about a possible Saturday race

Formula 1 bosses are considering introducing a sprint race into the Satuday of a grand prix race weekend , a move that could be introduced this season.

The revelation comes as chiefs shut the door on reversed grid races, another tweak that had been under discussion.

Formula 1 's new president Stefano Domenicali said that switching stating positions was off the table but added: "I think that it's important to think maybe of new ideas of being more attractive or interesting – [but] we don't have to lose the traditional approach of racing."

He said the multiple changes to the qualifying format – not all of which have been a success – has led chiefs to consider other ways of spicing up a race weekend.

"What we are looking at is what could be the approach of the so-called sprint race on Saturday," Domenicali added. "We are thinking if this could be tested already this year. There are discussions going on with the teams, in the right forum. And I think that maybe this could be the only one thing that could be interesting."

He added that he was also seeking ways of giving rookies more time in grand prix machines. Restrictions on testing mean that the chances for newcomers are limited and he was keen that the next generation of talents had their chance to shine.

"We need to give attention once again to the rookies," said Domenicali. "We need to create [chances for rookies to drive F1 cars] not only in the free practice, as already is written into the regulations. Maybe we can create events, highlighting the fact that we need to focus the attention on the rookies. We have a very good number of young drivers that are already in Formula 1, but we cannot stop that flow going on."

BAHRAIN COULD DOUBLE UP FOR FORMULA 1 AGAIN IN RESHUFFLE

Formula 1 could again host a double header in Bahrain, mirroring the 2020 season, as uncertainty still surrounds the calendar for this term.

The third race of the proposed 23-race line-up this year is yet to be confirmed, and it was initially thought that this slot would be taken by a race at the Algarve circuit, which hosted its first Portuguese Grand Prix last season.

However, with the worsening coronavirus situation in the country, grand prix bosses could be forced into a rethink.

New F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali admitted that a second desert grand prix is on the agenda if it needs to be.

He said: "As soon as we can, we will be able to announce something, and that will be in the next days, not in the next two months.

"I've got personal meetings during this weekend to understand what is the state of the situation, and one of the possible plan Bs could be a double race in Bahrain. But this is one plan and nothing is confirmed. We're focusing to try to keep the calendar as it is."

OLIPHANT TO PARTNER TURKINGTON FOR 2021 BTCC

Former Ginetta champion retains place in title-chasing WSR BMW 330i M Sport squad

Oliphant: Wants progress

By Matt James

Race-winner Tom Oliphant will return to the British Touring Car Championship this season at the wheel of an WSR-run BMW 330i M Sport machine alongside Colin Turkington.

Oliphant contested the BTCC for a third time in 2020 and was a winner at Brands Hatch, as well as taking three other podiums on his way to sixth place in the drivers' championship. He and Turkington will be joined by a yet-to-be announced third racer, with details expected shortly.

Oliphant said: "I took on greater responsibility [in chasing the teams' title in 2020] and that's really helped my own development both on-track and off it – I certainly feel stronger and more confident as a result.

"I'm ready to move up to the next level in the championship and with the best overall package on the grid, I'm confident I can challenge for the drivers' title and help BMW try to win a sixth straight manufacturers' title."

Team boss Dick Bennetts added: "Tom made a big step forwards in 2020, which I think was largely down to having a year's experience under his belt with the rear-wheel-drive BMW and feeling ready to push himself to the next level."

The British Touring Car Championship, which has rejigged its calendar, is due to get underway at Thruxton on May 8-9 .

OLLIE JACKSON COMPLETES MB MOTORSPORT LINE-UP ALONGSIDE HILL

Ollie Jackson says he will be gunning for multiple wins in the 2021 British Touring Car Championship after securing a deal to return to the grid with the revamped MB Motorsport squad.

MB Motorsport and Motorbase Performance, the team that Jackson won races for in 2020, will run in partnership this season as part of a new ownership structure.

Jackson's switch to the MB side of the team from the Motorbase division means he will remain in the Ford. Jackson took wins in the Focus last year at Snetterton and Silverstone on his way to 12th in the drivers' points.

He will line up alongside Jake Hill in the Mark Blundell-fronted operation.

Jackson said: "Last year was a really memorable one for me and I'm determined to build upon that.

"I got on really well with the Ford Focus ST and now have the opportunity to take that success to another level in 2021.

"I'm also really pleased that the make-up of the team will allow me to continue working with the majority of the personnel from last year as well as [new Motorbase boss] Shaun [Hollamby]."

MB colours: Jackson

OSBORNE AND NEATE TEAM UP FOR MOTORBASE BTCC CHALLENGE WITH POINTS TO PROVE

Sam Osborne and Andy Neate will form the driver line-up for the rejigged Motorbase Performance British Touring Car Championship team in 2021.

Osborne drove for MB Motorsport in his second BTCC season last term and finished fourth in the hunt for the Jack Sears Trophy, held in 2020 for drivers who had yet to secure a BTCC podium finish. Neate returned to the BTCC with Motorbase Performance last year for his first full season since 2012. He scored points on two occasions on his way to 25th in the drivers' standings.

The Motorbase team is under new ownership this season, with businessman Peter Osborne and AmDTuning.com chief Shaun Hollamby taking the reins.

They have taken over the running of the Ford Focus machines and will oversee the operation of the sister MB Motorsport machines.

Hollamby said: "I have a great relationship with Andy and Sam and collectively we have a few points to prove this year.

"That is something that is motivating all of the team as we look ahead to the new season. Both Andy and Sam possess a great deal of natural ability, which you can see from their past successes; the challenge for both of them is to showcase their potential."

Photo: RAM Racing, Jakob Ebrey, GT Open, Praga, Graham Holbon

RAM Merc gets new look for '21

RAM TARGETS BRITISH GT TITLE WITH LOGGIE AND BUURMAN RETURN

Duo gunning for the championship with RAM Racing in all-Pro-Am British GT3 battle

By Graham Keilloh

Reigning GT3 Pro-Am champion pair Ian Loggie and Yelmer Buurman are set to be among the overall British GT title favourites as they return this season with RAM Racing.

RAM, which was close runner-up in 2020's drivers' and teams' championships, will again enter two Mercedes-AMG GT3s in British GT's 2021 contest. Amateur racer Loggie and Mercedes works pilot Buurman last year were regular frontrunners with RAM and, with previously dominant Silver Cup pairings now banned in GT3, the Pro-Am duo should be in the hunt for the overall crown.

Their #6 Mercedes also has a colour change to pink, in support of blood cancer charity Cure Leukaemia.

RAM is set to confirm its second entrant pair soon. Buurman and Loggie's RAM team-mate duo last year was Sam De Haan and Patrick Kujala in a now-obsolete all-Silver pair.

Buurman said: "Last year was pretty tough as it became clear quite early on that a Silver-Silver pairing would win the overall title. Us Pro-Ams couldn't quite live with them if there was a safety car or any kind of interruption. This year will be different and we're 100% out for the overall championship.

"Ian has progressed so well in his driving over the last year. He listens and learns very quickly, and has the skill to make changes to his technique to get faster each time he goes out. It's fantastic to work with a driver like that, and I know RAM will give us a car capable of fighting for this championship."

Buurman (l) and Loggie (r) were top 2020 Pro-Am pair

Newcomers and notable names for Greystone debut

GREYSTONE TO MAKE RACING DEBUT WITH TWO-CAR GT CUP ATTACK

Noted track and test day outfit Greystone GT is making the move into racing in 2021 with full-season GT Cup campaigns for two McLaren 570S GT4s.

Drivers Mark Hopton and Iain Campbell first got involved with Greystone GT through its supercar trackday programme, and will complete their first full-time racing seasons in GT Cup's GTH class. Hopton and Campbell are paired respectively with GP2 race-winner Adam Carroll and European Le Mans Series champion Oli Webb, who worked with them on their development.

Team principal and former FF Corse boss Mark McLoughlin told Motorsport News that it had been his intention to move Greystone GT into racing since founding the outfit in 2016.

"This is very much part of what we've been planning over the last few years," McLoughlin told MN. "We've put together a really strong team of international-level staff members and we've all got experience at higher levels. We've been building the team up for the last three years, now we're ready to take the step into racing.

"We want to give ourselves the opportunity to grow into international racing in the coming years as well. If we work hard and keep doing what we've been doing I'm confident we'll be branching out.

"GT Cup, it's a great championship for building experience for drivers to go on to achieve further success in the sport."

RISING STAR REECE BARR GETS FULL GT OPEN CAMPAIGN IN HONDA NSX GT3

BRDC Rising Star Reece Barr is to get full-time racing in 2021 competing in the International GT Open with Reno Racing driving the multiple title-winning Honda NSX GT3 Evo.

The 20-year-old last year became the first signing to the driver development programme of long-time Honda partner and NSX GT3 builder JAS Motorsport. Late in 2020 Barr got his first racing as part of the programme in a Reno-run NSX GT3 at the GT Open's Barcelona season finale, where he took a Pro-Am pole position and alongside co-driver Jens Moller twice finished third in class.

Reno, which intends to field a two-car GT Open 2021 line-up, is evaluating driving partners for Barr to form either a Pro or a Pro-Am entry this season.

JAS driver development programme manager Riccardo Incarbone said: "Reece has made tremendous progress since becoming a JAS development driver and the performance he was able to put on with Reno at Barcelona last year was exactly the reward he deserved for how hard he has worked. There is no doubt in my mind that Reece and Reno Racing can win races immediately."

Barr gets full season

IN BRIEF

BARC goes live

Sixteen British Automobile Racing Club race meetings will be streamed live in 2021, with commentary, graphics and full production, on the club's Facebook page and YouTube channel. Also a weekly BARC highlights show, called 'Full Throttle', will be aired on free-to-air sports channel FreeSports. In a first for UK club racing, the channel will also broadcast live footage from certain events, as scheduling permits.

Redline returns

The most successful team in Porsche Carrera Cup GB history Redline Racing will be back in the championship this season with 20-year-old Micah Stanley the first confirmed driver of its multi-car entry. Anglo-German Stanley sat out 2020 due to Covid travel restrictions and competed in British GT in 2019 as part of Aston Martin's young driver academy.

Latest Legends

The Legends Cars championship has confirmed the latest 10 drivers for its 2021 season, in what it anticipates will be a 30-plus car entry. The 10 include returning multiple 2019 race-winner Marcus Pett, frontrunner Mike Schlup, popular Gerrard McCosh, plus Budd brothers Charlie and Dan switching from Ginetta GT5 Challenge. These follow the initial 10 entrants confirmed earlier this month *(see MN, February 4)*.

McCosh and friend Napoleon!

Broadbent: virtual to reality

SIM STAR BROADBENT MOVES TO REAL-LIFE PRAGA RACING

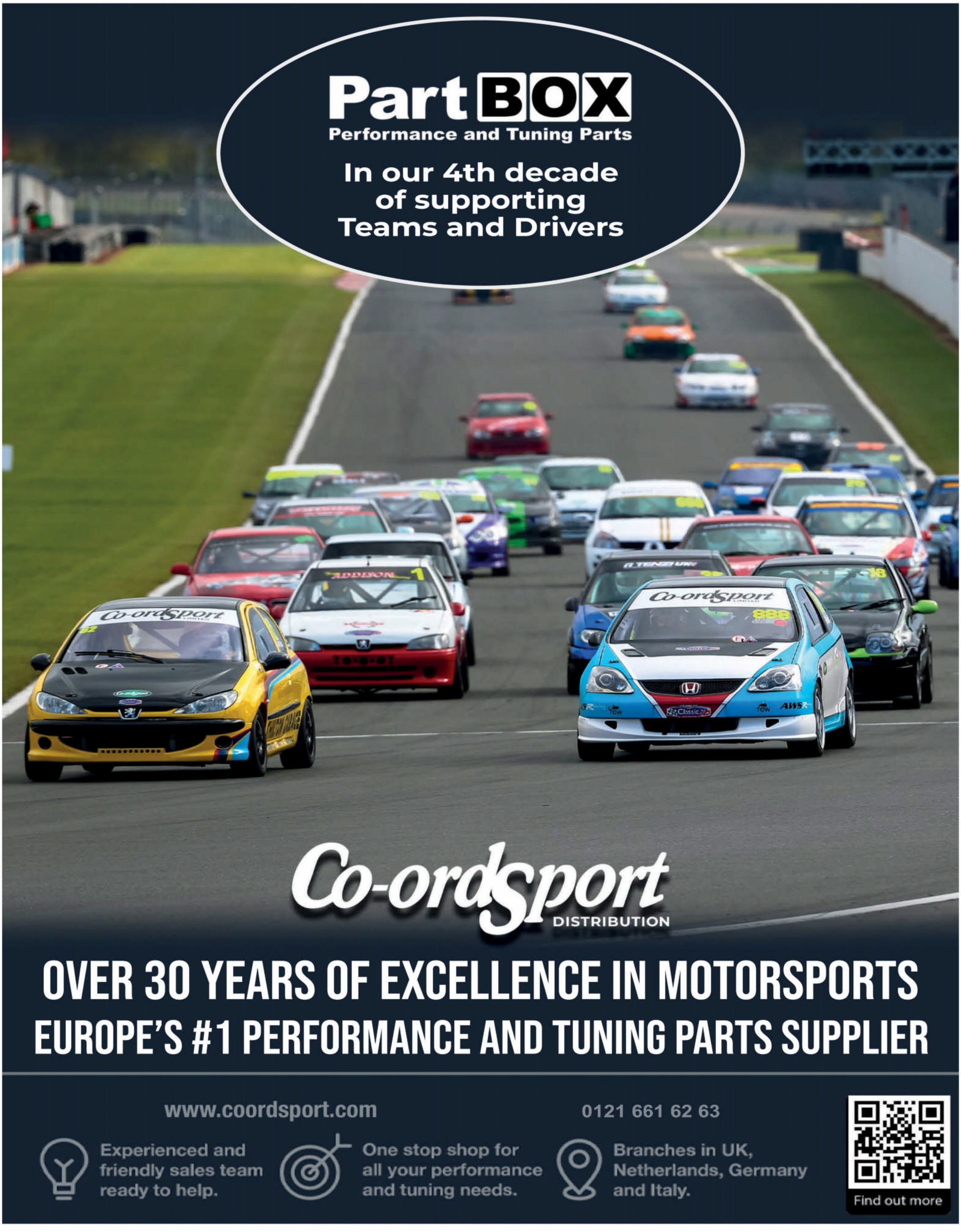
Esports and YouTube star Jimmy Broadbent will make the jump to real-world racing in 2021 driving the newly upgraded high-performance Praga R1 in the Britcar Endurance championship.

Broadbent will join Praga's Britcar guest driver programme that will have five factory R1s in the championship's new Praga-only class.

Broadbent has a sim racing YouTube channel with 600,000 subscribers, and has won Le Mans 24 Hours and Indianapolis 500 Esports contests.

He said: "The new R1 looks like an absolute weapon! I can't wait to get behind the wheel and start learning what the car is all about. It will be a big challenge, but the support Praga are providing is incredible."

Praga Cars UK managing director Mark Harrison added: "[This won't] be an easy challenge for Jimmy, but that is what appeals to him and also fits the brief for all of our guest drivers."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RACING NEWS

Senna and Serra in FF1600

Photo: Motorsport Images, Team Brazil Scholarship, Rachel Bourne, Jakob Ebrey

The scholarship offers one funded 2021 Festival seat

NEXT BRAZILIAN STAR SOUGHT FOR TEAM BRAZIL SCHOLARSHIP FESTIVAL CHANCE

Roberto Moreno-guided outfit to let one up-and-comer follow in famous footsteps at Festival

By Graham Keilloh

Team Brazil Scholarship with Roberto Moreno is looking for the next Brazilian star to follow in Ayrton Senna's footsteps with a funded seat competing at this year's Formula Ford Festival.

Formula 1 and Champ Car star Moreno is one of the scholarship's judges, alongside three-time UK Classic Formula Ford champion Adriano Medeiros and veteran racer Djalma 'o Monstro' Fogaca.

The opportunity is for Brazilian racers aged 16 to 25, and the panel using race results and interviews will pick one driver from a six-strong shortlist to race at this year's Festival as well as get three days of testing.

The scholarship team also hopes in future seasons to expand the opportunities offered.

The project is the brainchild of Vera Lyra Oliveira Dos Santos and it will partner with the Swift Cooper team, with which reigning Castle Combe FF1600 champion Luke Cooper is a regular frontrunner.

"It's really exciting to be involved with it," Cooper told Motorsport News. "Lyra was over here with me for the Festival last year and had watched the previous Festival. She saw the Team USA [scholarship] guys doing it and wondered if there was a chance of getting Brazil drivers together to do something similar. The more she looked into it the more she realised how much involvement Brazil had in the Festival over the years."

Senna cut his car racing teeth in UK Formula Ford in 1981, though didn't compete at the Festival. Moreno, Chico Serra and Niko Palhares are Brazil's winners of the Brands Hatch end-of-season showpiece.

W SERIES STAR GILKES GETS UK FF1600 CAMPAIGN

W Series racer Megan Gilkes will compete in the National Formula Ford 1600 championship this year with Kevin Mills Racing.

Gilkes raced in the Formula Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy with Kevin Mills at the end of last year and also aims to compete in this year's FF1600 end-of-year showpieces. She finished runner-up in 2020's Canadian F1600 championship and won W Series' reversed-grid Assen race in 2019.

"I was extremely impressed by the level of competition [in the Festival and Walter Hayes]," Gilkes told Motorsport News. "I know that I will be racing against some of the most talented, experienced young drivers in Formula Ford. Some of the best of the best.

"Right from the moment I started working with Kevin it was a really good team atmosphere, the cars were very well-prepped, everyone was really great to work with.

"To get some podiums against those really top-line drivers would definitely be a very good thing, maybe even some wins.

"I'll be looking to get my name out there this season in Europe again and see where it leads, something along the lines of British F3. The end goal is to keep racing in Europe after this season."

Gilkes added that she didn't do herself justice in W Series due to food poisoning, and hopes this year to also compete in the Canadian Grand Prix's F1600 support race.

Gilkes was impressed by UK FF1600 competitiveness

IN BRIEF

Aron to F3

Young American Bryce Aron will compete in BRDC British Formula 3 this season with Carlin, joining Zak O'Sullivan and Christian Mansell. Aron sampled UK racing last year in Formula Ford with Low Dempsey Racing. He said: "I had the opportunity to test the F3 car at the end of last year and was blown away, it's certainly a big step up."

Horsten back

Bart Horsten is seeking the title as he returns to BRDC Formula 3 in 2021, switching to Hitech GP after previous home Lanan Racing left the category. The 17-year-old finished 10th in the table last year. Horsten said: "It [F3] was the obvious choice to make a return for another season and this time with the intention of challenging for the championship."

Elite first signing

Javier Sagrera Pont is the first confirmed driver for Elite Motorsport's maiden BRDC Formula 3 campaign. Spain's 17-year-old karting graduate completed a partial season in Spanish F4 in 2020. He said: "My hopes and aims are to mature and develop more as a driver due to the tracks that I will face in England. I also want to be fighting for the championship."

Bolger to F4

Japanese Dougie Bolger will race in British Formula 4 this year with Carlin for his single-seater racing debut. The 16-year-old karter has completed an extensive team testing programme, plus in early 2018 was selected as a McLaren DNA programme member. "Driving in F4 is something I couldn't imagine a few years ago, but in testing I felt very comfortable," Bolger said.

Bolger: F4 with Carlin

Dutchman De Haan is first overseas scholarship winner

GINETTA JUNIOR SCHOLARSHIP WINNER DE HAAN LANDS RICHARDSON SEAT

Ginetta Scholarship winner Robert de Haan is aiming for honours this year after being confirmed with a Richardson Racing seat for 2021's championship for 14-to-17-year-olds.

The 14-year-old karting graduate won the three-day, 65-driver, scholarship contest jointly with Maurice Henry late last year, and they both get prize funded Junior drives. Henry has a Fox Motorsport seat confirmed for 2021 *(see MN, February 4)*.

Dutchman De Haan was the first overseas driver to take the award, plus is the first to be confirmed in what Richardson intends will be a multi-car 2021 line-up.

De Haan said: "I'm going into 2021 with one goal – and that is to take as many trophies back home to the Netherlands as I can!"

Richardson Racing team boss Gwyn Richardson added: "There's no doubt that he has the ability to compete at the sharp end, [we] firmly expect him to be a contender for at least the Rookie title."

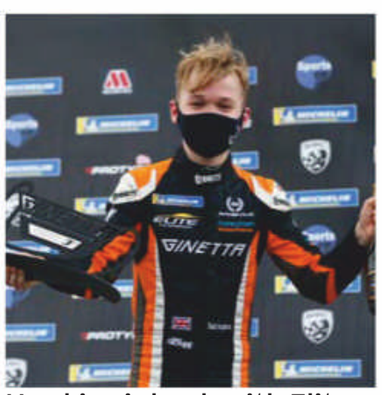
ELITE CONFIRMS SIX GINETTA JUNIOR DRIVERS

Multiple championship-winning Elite Motorsport has confirmed the six youngsters that will compete with the team in this year's Ginetta Junior championship.

Elite has taken the Junior category's drivers' crown in each of last four years, and for 2021 Seb Hopkins and Tommy Pintos remain with the team for a second season, while Will Jenkins who joined Elite late last year gets a full campaign.

They are joined by Elite newcomer Joe Warhurst, who has two 2020 Junior race weekends under his belt, and karting graduates Max Hall and Josh Rowledge.

Hopkins and Pintos finished fifth and seventh respectively in last year's Junior standings.



Hopkins is back with Elite

BRITISH F3 CHAMP LUNDQVIST HAS "POWERHOUSE" INDY CHANCE

BRDC British Formula 3 champion Linus Lundqvist has moved a step closer to IndyCar by sealing his 2021 Indy Lights graduation with newly formed Global Racing Group with HMD Motorsports.

Lundqvist took a dominant Formula Regional Americas title last year, and his prize included becoming the first recipient of the Honda Performance Development Indy Lights Scholarship to partly finance his rise to the rung of the 'Road to Indy' ladder one below IndyCar.

The 2018 British F3 champion now eyes the Indy Lights title that will get him a scholarship to race in at least three IndyCar events in 2022, including the Indy 500. His new team outfit combines Global Racing Group – for which Lundqvist raced in 2020 – and Indy Lights regular HMD Motorsports.

"I am ecstatic to finally be able to announce my plans for 2021 and shift my focus to race wins and the quest for the championship," Lundqvist said. "The partnership between Global Racing Group and HMD Motorsports has really formed a powerhouse programme in the Road to Indy."

Advertising enquiries: 01233 228753

RALLY NEWS

IN BRIEF

Pryce's project
British Rally Championship regular Osian Pryce is building his own historic Ford Escort Mk2 – a car he has history with having driven one on British Historic rounds and on the Escort Rally Special in Belgium. Much of the body has already been done, so fitting the engine is the next task to be completed.

Woodhouse's sale
Ian Woodhouse, the 2015/16 Motorsport News Circuit Rally champion, has sold his title-winning Ford Escort Mk2. His last competitive appearance was on the Donington Park Rally last year where he was second behind Frank Bird. Woodhouse admitted it was a "sad day" to let the car go but it's "hopefully for better things".

Epynt postponed
The Tour of Epynt, which was scheduled for April 3, was postponed last week but organisers don't intend to cancel. Port Talbot Motor Club is now working towards a July 11 date or alternatively a slot in early August.

Rallying on TV
M-Sport WRC driver Gus Greensmith and Andretti Extreme E pilot Catie Munnings were acting as expert tutors last week during filming for an upcoming episode of Sky One's *A League of Their Own*. Taking place at Langley Park Rally School, EDSL Sport provided a couple of Ford Fiesta Rally4s for the day.

No Rali Bae in 2021
Organisers of Rali Bae Ceredigion - the first closed-road rally in Wales - have confirmed a 2022 date of September 3-4, meaning it won't take place this year. Chairman Phil Pugh said: "It's been our intention to organise the rally when the time is right and not before."

RALLYING ALLOWED IN ENGLISH FORESTS AGAIN AFTER EASTER

After a consultation, Forestry England has permitted the use of its forests for motorsport

Photos: Chicane Media, Hyundai Motorsport, Jakob Ebrey

Rallying brings costs and benefits

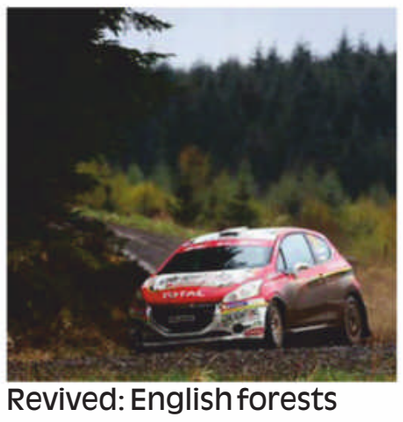
By Luke Barry

Rallying can now head into the English forests again subject to coronavirus restrictions, but BTRDA president Mike Broad has warned the discipline "mustn't relax" after this positive news.

Forestry England commissioned an independent review of motorsport in English forests in September 2020 and received 1700 individual responses, which Motorsport News understands impressed the reviewers. Throughout the consultation period motorsport was suspended from using government-owned forests – something that hampered organisers of the Malcolm Wilson Rally in their 2021 planning – but the review highlighted a number of areas of mutual interest between motorsport and Forestry England.

MN understands Motorsport UK was informed of the outcome in January, and it will now work with Forestry England to conclude a new long-term deal and plan to sustain motorsport in the forests.

Mike Seddon, Forestry England chief executive, said: "The nation's forests have in the past found themselves at the leading edge of motorsports in England. Our review has made it clear to me that we must take the opportunity to become leaders again.


Revived: English forests

"Together, this is our chance to reduce the environmental footprint of motorsport and improve its financial support for the forests and local businesses. We'll better understand what the right event in the right place looks like, the true costs and how we deal with them. Perhaps we can bring some new audiences too."

Event organiser Colin Heppenstall told MN the news is what organisers had been waiting for". He said: "It's very positive news that they've acknowledged the input motorsport brings into the forest estate and into the local economies around the forests. I'm looking forward to the next release as regards to what's going to happen between Motorsport UK and Forestry England in rates and new agreements to start rallying in the forest estate."

BTRDA president Broad is similarly enthused, describing the news as welcome, but he doesn't want the rallying's stakeholders to rest on their laurels. He said: "It keeps us as a sport on our mettle.

"We mustn't relax because they're happy for us to continue because we need to innovate and change to accommodate it [new sustainability measures], definitely. We must evolve to what they require.

"It's something that I've always banged on about that not just rallying, but motorsport, we are really bad at valuing our sport. If we did it would be astronomical and very impressive, and it should be done. Things like these consultations that come out of the blue require us to do that."

A nine-page report of the review's findings estimated motorsport brings £2.2-2.4 million per annum to rural economies but also represents challenges to the environment. It concludes that a "deliberate move towards electric and alternative fuel vehicles" would work greatly in motorsport's favour.

Over a year has passed since the last Tarmac round

IRISH TARMAC CANCELLATION WAS "THE RIGHT THING TO DO"

The 2021 Irish Tarmac Rally Championship was cancelled last week, a decision a leading competitor labelled as "definitely the right thing to do".

Over 12 months have passed since the last Irish Tarmac round, Galway International, but the 2021 series was scrapped just five weeks into the year.

The Galway, West Cork and Circuit of Ireland events had already been cancelled so Colman Hegarty, chairman of series organiser TROA, believes: "ongoing restrictions mean that there is a degree of uncertainty regarding the other four events".

He added: "The board decided it was in the best interest of all stakeholders to cancel this year's championship. Should one or all of the four remaining events run in the latter part of 2021, TROA pledges its full support to those events."

Series regular Joe McGonigle told MN he doesn't expect rallying to resume in Ireland until late summer, and thought the championship would have been unfeasible.

"As much as I'd love to be rallying it's definitely the right thing to do," McGonigle said. "If we ran a rally in June and there was a coronavirus outbreak in that area that would be really harmful to rallying and it could be very hard for us to go rallying in that area again.

"If a rally like the Cork 20 tries to run, Cork 20 will have a reserve list – it's a great rally anyway. But, at this stage, if somebody organised a rally around Tesco car park everybody would be doing it! Anything at all that runs is going to be very well supported."

CAMBRIAN RALLY COULD INCLUDE A NEW ASPHALT STAGE

Organisers of the Cambrian Rally have revealed further details about the October 30 event, which will once again be based in Llandudno.

A total of 45 stage miles will be on offer to BTRDA and Welsh Rally Championship crews with over 50 available to British Rally Championship drivers. All event documents will be paperless with an electronic noticeboard – utilising lessons from Rali Adfer Coedwigoedd Cymru in December – while organisers are in dialogue with another stakeholder about a new asphalt stage.

In moving from February to October, the Cambrian moved to the rear of both the BTRDA and BRC calendars but MN understands both series organisers are reworking their calendars due to a recent spate of cancelled and postponed events.

A source confirmed to MN: "I think it's safe to say there will be some sort of championship this year. My opinion is we could see events in June and July but every day something changes in the real world, it's a bit kind of chicken and egg."

The Great Orme has been a regular Cambrian test in past

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RALLY NEWS

SOLBERG HANDED WORLD RALLY CAR DEBUT FOR ARCTIC

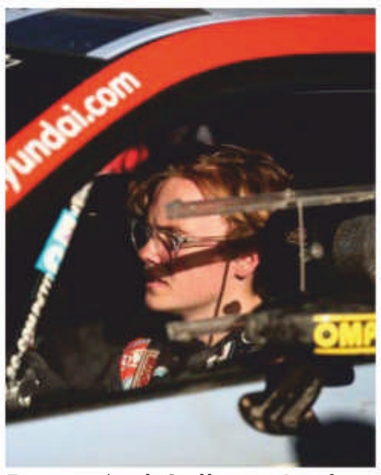
On just his eighth WRC start, Oliver Solberg will step up to drive a Hyundai World Rally Car on Arctic Rally Finland.

The 19-year-old son of 2003 WRC champion Petter Solberg has been handed a semi-works Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC for what will be his second Arctic start in as many months after tackling January's Arctic Lapland Rally in an i20 R5.

"This really is a dream to be making my debut in a World Rally Car with the reigning manufacturers' champions," said Solberg.

"I have driven quite a lot on the snow, and I know this type of condition quite well, but the car is completely new for me. I want to come out of every stage understanding the car more than when I started it."

Thierry Neuville and Ott Tanak will join Craig Breen in the main Hyundai attack, while Pierre-Louis Loubet is due to compete in a privately-run machine.



Promoted: Solberg Junior

Breen got used to the snowy roads last Friday

Photos: Hyundai Motorsport, M-Sport, FIA ERC

ARCTIC'S ESSENTIAL KIT

With Arctic Rally Finland organisers confirming the event will run behind closed doors due to Covid-19 restrictions, rally chief are telling crews that every car must carry a "winter survival kit".

Because immediate help won't be at hand from fans lining the route, each car must have onboard two shovels and warm clothing for the driver and co-driver in the event of a car going off the road and getting stuck in snowbanks.

Event organisers have described carrying the equipment as an "essential requirement", which suggests there is a genuine concern among rally officials about what will happen if drivers and co-drivers are stuck on stages in temperatures that could fall to minus 20 degrees centigrade.

BREEN READY FOR A BIG CHALLENGE ON ARCTIC RALLY

Irish Hyundai WRC driver expecting a tough first rally of the season

By Graham Lister

Craig Breen expects a "big challenge" when he makes his first start of the World Rally Championship season on Finland's all-new winter round at the end of the month.

Breen, who turned 31 last week, has been confirmed in the third factory Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC for Arctic Rally Finland with fellow Irishman Paul Nagle co-driving.

Although Breen has never competed in the Lapland region where the new WRC round will take place from February 26-28, he has tested there. He also tackled a winter rally in Finland last February, when he finished third in an i20 R5 alongside stand-in co-driver John Rowan.

"I've done a test there in 2014, not on or around the stages or in that direction but I did do a test in Rovaniemi," Breen told MN. "Having looked at some of the stages from the Arctic National Rally, it looks obviously very fast, not so much of a profile like you'd have in traditional Finland with crests and jumps but still at the same time a big challenge."

Breen and Nagle were given an insight into the Arctic Rally Finland route last week when first organisers released initial details of the stages and then they tested on Friday. Featuring 10 tests over a competitive distance of 156 miles, the itinerary will include two runs at night when ambient temperatures could potentially drop to minus 20 degrees.

Deputy clerk of the course Kari Nuutinen is therefore convinced there will be no Rally Sweden-style ice shortages of 12 months ago: "The ambient temperatures should be between minus six and minus 14 degrees centigrade during the week of the rally although they could dip as low as minus 20," he said.

"And there will be plenty of snow – or what Lapland people call 'white gold' – on the ground, so perfect conditions. The stages won't be too unfamiliar to those used on the Arctic Lapland Rally, although some will be shorter to suit the WRC format, while others will run in reverse direction to create a level playing field for crews."

Season will now begin in Azores like it did in 2019 (above) and two months late

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON DELAYED BY COVID-19

The start of the European Rally Championship season has been delayed to early May with the planned Portuguese double-header no longer possible.

A strict national lockdown in the country has prevented organisers from preparing the route for Rally Serras de Fafe and the Azores Rallye, forcing the calendar to be rejigged.

The loose-surface Azores Rallye is taking Fafe's place as the season opener, albeit from May 6-8 instead of March 25-27, with Fafe's gravel round getting a new date of September 24-26.

Rally Islas Canarias, which had been due to run from May 6-8, has been handed the same season-finale status it enjoyed last year, this time from November 18-20, after local authorities requested a delay to the all-asphalt event's scheduling due to the pandemic.

The ERC's other five planned events for 2021 in Poland, Latvia, Italy, Czech Republic and Hungary are unaffected by the changes.

ARMSTRONG IMPRESSED BY NEW FIESTA RALLY3

Britons Jon Armstrong and Ruairi Bell were among several drivers to test the new Ford Fiesta Rally3 in Poland last week.

M-Sport Poland is the first outfit to build a four-wheel-drive Rally3 car, the FIA's replacement for Group N and the step between Rally4 and Rally2.

Armstrong told MN he was impressed by the new car's capabilities, admitting: "If I had the money I'd probably be thinking about getting one."

He continued: "It's really good for junior drivers. You can be pretty aggressive with it and it didn't seem to want to punish me for being aggressive. It was very driveable. When you get it sideways it felt very controllable, too. M-Sport Poland have done a really nice job."

While the Fiesta Rally3 will be eligible for the WRC, it won't be used as the Junior WRC's base car until 2022. However, the ERC's top-tier junior class has adopted the use of Rally3 regulations as standard from this season.

"I'm really excited to see what it can do on the stages," added Armstrong. "My gut feeling is if you take one of these to the national rallies you might be able to stick it in the top three. It's a good little car it should be pretty popular in the years to come."

ERC3 Junior champion Ken Torn – who will drive a Fiesta Rally3 in this year's ERC Junior – and last season's JWRC title winner Tom Kristensson were also at the Silesia Ring-based test.

M-Sport Poland invited drivers to try its new machine

New Sardinia base for 2021

RALLY SARDINIA MOVES TO THE EAST FOR 2021

Italy's World championship qualifier will remain on Sardinia this season but is heading back to the industrial port town of Olbia on the east of the island after seven years based on the west in Alghero.

Organisers have revealed a 189-mile route covering 20 stages for the gravel event from June 3-6.

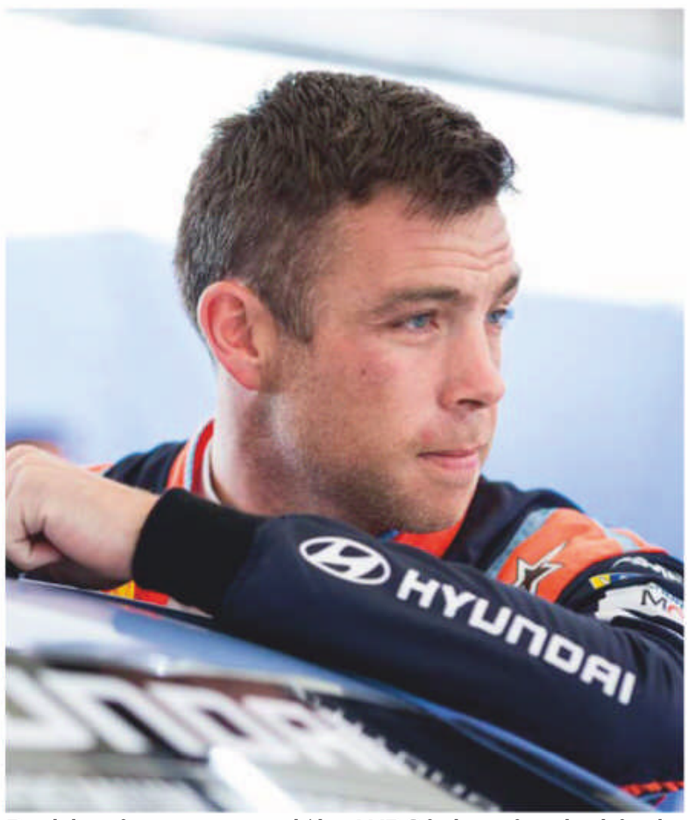
Legs one and two are made up of a number of Sardinian staples including Monte Lerno – home of the famous Micky's Jump – and Terranova. However, the closing day's action will run closer to Olbia with Arzachena-Braniatogghiu last used by WRC cars in 2005.

Meanwhile, the event-closing powerstage, Aglientu-Rena Majore, was a regular on the Sardinia's Costa Smeralda Rally.

PADDON FEARS WRC COULD BE "LEFT IN THE DARK AGES"

Former Hyundai driver says the proposed hybrid rules are too far behind the motoring industry

Photos: Hyundai Motorsport, Graeme Murray Photography, Extreme E, William Neill



Paddon is concerned the WRC is lagging behind

The Kona EV has recently been tested on gravel stages

By Hal Ridge

World Rally Championship event winner Hayden Paddon has raised fears that the WRC could be "left in the dark ages" without a rethink to the hybrid regulations that are set to be introduced in 2022.

Paddon and his Rallysport team have created an all-electric Hyundai Kona rally car from scratch, which will begin development running this year in sprints and hillclimbs before hitting the rally stages in his New Zealand homeland in 2022. Following that, Paddon has plans to campaign the car on the international stage. That means Paddon is significantly ahead of the FIA in development, and the 2016 Rally Argentina winner told MN the new rules are "a step but it's a very small step".

He said: "If I'm brutally honest I think it's a tick-the-box exercise, I don't think it's actually meeting the requirements of where the automotive industry is going.

Motorsport has always been the leading edge of technology that's where manufacturers test or develop new tech.

"But now, a road car you can buy off the showroom floor, a full EV, is more sophisticated with the electronics and systems than what WRC cars have. If that continues, especially if these rules for hybrid come in and they're frozen for five years, the sport's going to be in the dark ages by the time it comes out in 2027-2028."

Paddon believes his own squad has proved what's achievable, despite limited resources. "We're a small team of seven on the other side of the world, and if we think it's possible and we can find some options, I don't know why the big teams and big manufacturers can't," he said.

"Obviously I first-hand know it's not simple, but motorsport is also about trying to find solutions to problems and to show that the product, the cars and EV formula is cool, so I think there's a bit of a missed opportunity there at the moment."

RALLY DRIVER BROWN HEADS TO RALLYCROSS FOR 2021

Rally driver Steve Brown will switch to rallycross for a campaign in the BMW Mini category within the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy this year.

Experienced asphalt rally driver Brown – who is best known for driving his wide-track Nissan Micra rally car – raced in the BMW Mini class in 2019 and finished third overall in the series as part of the Bellerby Motorsport squad. With his rallying plans put on hold last year due to Covid-19 and uncertainty over stage rallying in the UK for 2021, Brown has committed to a full BMW Mini season.

"I certainly didn't think I'd be returning to the British Rallycross Championship so soon but now we have put the final piece of the jigsaw in place I'm very excited to head back to the series for a second time," Brown said. "Rallying is going through a tough time at the moment and I wanted little more certainty to my 2021 season after a nightmare in 2020. I'd been considering a return for a while and the more I looked into it the better proposition it became and it soon became an easy choice.

"I learnt a lot about rallycross in a very short space of time in 2019 so hopefully that means I can hit the ground running this time," he added. "It wasn't so much about the car control or handling, it was the racecraft aspect of the discipline which was tough to get my head around but I soon learnt how to get the most from the qualifying sessions and final.

"It would be nice to do better than third and with my previous experience that's certainly going to be the aim."

Brown has previous rallycross experience in the BMW Mini

Jenson Button got his first experience of the Extreme E ODYSSEY 21 last week at Walters Arena in Wales. With the deal coming together late for Button's JBXE squad to enter the series, it missed the group pre-season test in Spain before Christmas. The team is yet to announce the female driver for its duel-driver line-up.

NORTHERN IRISH RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP STILL SET TO RUN

Northern Ireland Rally Championship bosses have confirmed they still intend to run the series in 2021 despite the cancellation of the Tarmac-based contest (*see page 8*).

The championship was due to kick-off last weekend with the Kirkistown Stages Rally. However Covid restrictions has led to it, and the three following rounds, being postponed. Organisers of the series are planning to start the season in July rather than scrapping the competition entirely. If it comes to fruition, two of the proposed five rounds would be played out on closed public roads.

"We are hoping to run a five-round Northern Ireland Rally Championship between July and the end of the year that would consist of a mixture of single-venue and closed-road events," series spokesperson Jonathan MacDonald told MN. "This is dependent on the relaxation of Covid regulations and successful consultation with residents, especially with regards to any proposed closed-road rallies."

NI series will still go ahead

The Bishopscourt, Maiden City Stages, Tour of the Sperrins and Tyrone Stages plus as one unnamed reserve event complete the calendar.

Advertising enquiries: 01233 228753

HISTORICS

DOWN THE PUB

ANDY DEE-CROWNE

Historic Sports Car Club chief executive
Lives: Buckingham

Dee-Crowne: Proud of club

The HSCC won a major award
"Our Brands Hatch meeting won the 'competitive event of the year' award in the Royal Automobile Club Historic Awards. To win major awards two years running is a great for the club, which operates with a core HQ team of just four people. The HSCC is a long-established club and this award underlines its continuing place at the heart of historic racing. In 2019, our Historic F2 series won the 'category of the year award'."

It was a big challenge
"Running the Super Prix last year was a massive logistical challenge for our small team and it proved to be a success as the first major post-lockdown historic meeting. New procedures and systems had to be implemented to deal with the Covid issues, but the whole event ran incredibly well."

MSV and Motorsport UK played key parts
"The event could not have taken place without the commitment and foresight of Jonathan Palmer at MotorSport Vision and Hugh Chambers from Motorsport UK who worked tirelessly to get motorsport back on track. I also want to thank our members and guest competitors for their trust, understanding and compliance with those rules that were put in place."

He dedicated the award
"The historic racing community has lost some of its members to this indiscriminate virus and I would like, on behalf of the HSCC, to dedicate this award to all those who have lost loved ones during this pandemic."

Planning for 2021
"Now we are busy planning our 2021 season, which is due to start at Snetterton in mid-April. We are in the hands of the UK government and Motorsport UK about exactly when we can restart, but I remain hopeful that we will be able to run our full programme as planned. The signs are looking more positive."

He is optimistic
"We've just opened our entries for the whole season and we hope that competitors will enter as early as possible. We hope that everyone will be keen to get racing again, especially now that the UK vaccination programme is going ahead strongly."

Photos: Paul Lawrence

Donington should host historics return

HISTORIC ORGANISERS HOPEFUL ON 2021 CALENDAR

Top clubs continue plans for return-to-racing green light in April

By Paul Lawrence

Leading UK historic race organisers are hopeful of starting the 2021 racing season as planned and are pushing ahead with taking entries for events in April and May.

Masters Historic Racing, Motor Racing Legends and the Historic Sports Car Club have all opened their 2021 race entry systems recently and are encouraging competitors to enter events as early as possible. All three promoters have pledged full refunds if race meetings do not go ahead.

The possibility of the historic racing season starting in April remains subject to government and Motorsport UK guidelines and directives but there is a sense of optimism as key Covid-19 markers start to reduce and the UK vaccination programme pushes ahead.

The first major scheduled historic event is the Masters race meeting at Donington Park at Easter (April 2-3), featuring a range of Masters races as well as Historic Formula 2 and Classic Formula 3 from the HSCC. Motor Racing Legends is due to start its season at the Donington Historic Festival (May 1-2).

Rachel Bailey from Masters Historic Racing: "We're pretty sure we'll get racing underway. We opened our race entries last week and we've had a very good response. We are still hopeful for our Donington Park meeting at Easter and are operating on the basis that it is going ahead.

"We went racing last July soon after the end of the first lockdown. I think we have to accept that it will be fairly Anglocentric to begin with, but we are optimistic and are busy getting everything ready to start the season."

HERO battlers will be forced to wait for the start of the season

HERO dates on hold due to pandemic

HERO-ERA, the Historic Endurance Rally Organisation, has abandoned plans to run two UK classic rallies in March due to the ongoing pandemic.

HERO Challenge One, planned to run in Derbyshire on March 20, has been pushed back to Sunday May 9, while the Per Ardua Ad Infinitum set for March 5-6 in Somerset has been moved to January 7-8 next year.

The prolific rally organising company is also monitoring the position for events planned for later in 2021.

A spokesperson said: "We will be closely looking at the Scottish Malts and the Flying Scotsman (both due to run in April) and will advise of any changes as soon as possible."

Production class to break down cost barriers

Multiple historic racing champion Kevin Kivlochan has given his support to a new race series for production cars of the 1980s that he says will offer a more affordable way into historic racing for a new generation of racers.

The value of historic race cars has generally risen considerably over the last decade and Kivlochan believes that the Historic Sports Car Club's new 1980s Production Car Challenge will help to make historic racing more accessible to younger drivers.

Kivlochan said: "This is a perfect entry-level category and gives drivers a chance to be on the grid in a car that could easily cost them less than £10,000."

The series is open to cars with standard bodyshells and only minor modifications to engines and suspension and using treaded tyres. The series will not be open to Caterhams or homologation specials for competition.

A major new historic rally festival is planned for the Spa track and surrounding countryside this September 23-26. The 1st Francorchamps Rally Festival will be in the style of the Eifel Rallye Festival in Germany and will bring together a wide range of period rally cars on demonstration special stages. The event will be based at the famous Belgian Grand Prix track.

Williams grabs chance to race Formula 3 Ralt

Former Renault Clio and Mini Cooper racer Steve Williams will switch to historic single-seaters this season in a 1987 Formula 3 Ralt RT31.

Williams, who started racing in 1993 in FF1600 and later competed in Formula Renault, will now return to single-seaters to contest the Geoff Lees Trophy for 1980s racing cars.

The car has recently been brought back from Japan where it sat untouched in a factory for 27 years. It is thought to be the car used by Jan Lammers to take second at Macau in 1987.

"This will be my first foray into historic racing and I'm very much looking forward to getting started," said Williams.

IN BRIEF

Alistair Walker
MN is sad to report the death of British privateer racer Alistair Walker who enjoyed success in international sportscar and Formula 2 races though the 1960s and early 1970s. Walker raced all over the world including at Le Mans as well as racing an F2 Tecno for Frank Williams Racing Cars. In his later years he contested occasional historic races and died towards the end of January aged 76.

Deja vu pushed back
The promoters of the Deja Vu Ireland West event have taken the decision to postpone the retro tour event from May to September 17-18. A total of 85 participants have already signed up for a run through the asphalt special stages of Mayo and Connemara. Stars like Jimmy McRae and Austin MacHale are due to take part in the charity fund-raising event.

Saloons are back
The Historic Sports Car Club's Dunlop Saloon Car Cup will return in 2021 after last year's planned calendar was decimated by the Covid pandemic. Three key events are planned for the race series for touring cars from the 1970s right through to 2006, starting on the Silverstone GP track in May and then taking in double-headers at Donington Park and Oulton Park.

Yorkshire on hold
The North Yorkshire Classic, a round of the HRCR Clubmans Championship, has been pushed back into the summer in a bid to avoid pandemic disruption. The new date for the daylight classic road rally is Saturday July 3, which makes it provisionally the second event of the season after the East Anglian Classic on June 19. The reworked calendar takes in 10 events.

Pricey D-type
A 1955 Jaguar D-type with competition history recently sold for £4.3 million at an RM Sotheby's auction in Arizona, USA. The car was one of few D-types supplied in red from new and was raced in period by British racer Peter Blond who is said to have bought it when new from Bernie Ecclestone. Sadly BRDC member Blond, who raced through the 1950s, died in January aged 91 from Covid.

Bugattis in London
One of the most comprehensive collections of Brescia Bugattis will gather at the London Classic Car Show at Syon Park (June 25-27) to mark the model's 100th anniversary. In 1921, Bugatti T13s claimed the top four places in the Brescia Grand Prix, a result that led to the popular name for the car that really put the company into the racing spotlight.

COLUMNIST

DAVID ADDISON

MN's columnist-at-large has been glued to the small screen

Photos: Motorsport Images

McQueen's film was beset with trouble

James Garner: star of *Grand Prix*

There are positives to all these lockdowns: people get out more, all that exercise. People avoid eye contact with you in the fear that you might be part of that 94.1% who doesn't have it and might contract it at any second. And one has a justification to watch whatever you want and not feel guilty. I do hope Den and Angie Watts get back together...

Two weeks ago we stumbled across *Le Mans* on BBC2, Steve McQueen's awesome movie filmed in 1970 but released in '71. Last year, understandably, the race organisers the Automobile Club de l'Ouest was championing its virtual Le Mans 24 Hours but the film is something that played a massive part in the awareness of the race and even now is very watchable. Perhaps, even, it is better now thanks to nostalgia and with the sights and sounds of 1970s sportscar racing so well documented, it is a brilliant time machine to hop aboard.

Of course, it oh-so nearly became a disaster. McQueen, riding high on the back of *Bullitt*, could do no wrong in Hollywood and this movie was his baby, his project. Having finished second in the Sebring 12 Hours in 1970, despite his foot in plaster from a motorcycle accident, McQueen was barred from racing at Le Mans by the movie's distribution company for fear that the film's big star would be injured.

Stung by that, and missing out on a drive in the race, McQueen set out to prove himself to the real drivers who were involved in the driving sequences. He wanted to do as much driving himself as possible and wanted the film to be as realistic as it could, again to show the real drivers, his heroes, that he was serious about motor racing.

And this is where the rot set in with McQueen wanting to document the race and the magic of Le Mans and Hollywood wanting a story, a plot. Cars driving round for 24 hours does not make a happy movie executive. McQueen wanted his character, Michael Delaney, to lose: his favoured scriptwriter Alan Trustman said that Delaney needed to win the race. Trustman's movie career ended in a meeting that discussed that very point. He never worked in films again...

Director John Sturges walked out as the shambles around him ensued, Derek Bell had a fiery incident when doubling for Siegfried Rauch (Erich Stahler) in a Ferrari 512 and David Piper had his huge accident that cost him a lower leg after his Porsche 917 crashed for reasons unknown. Part of the theory was low tyre pressures as the crew had been sitting around waiting as with no script and no plot they didn't know what to do next.

McQueen had to forego any financial involvement in order to get the picture finished but 50 years on its contribution to motor racing is immense. You cannot go to Le Mans and not hear the film in your head and the range of McQueen/Gulf-Porsche/Delaney merchandise is a booming market. And how many Monacos did Tag-Heuer sell when it relaunched the watch in 2003, McQueen having worn one in the movie?

Motor racing movies weren't new by 1971, however. A number had been attempted, even as far back in 1913 when Fatty Arbuckle appeared in the silent film *The Speed Kings* and by 1932 James Cagney was in *The Crowd Roars*, focusing on American racing. There was *The Green Helmet* in 1961 that starred, among others, Sid James, but the best yet came in 1966. Celebrated director John Frankenheimer filmed *Grand Prix,* which had both real footage, onboard cameras and a plot as it focused on disillusioned French ace Jean-Pierre Sarti wrestling his fears over safety, Pete Aron lurching from Jordan-BRM to the media and then to Yamura to win the title at Monza as Sarti perishes, plus Jim Clark-lookalike Brian Bedford as Scott Stoddard who returns to the cockpit after a huge Monaco accident.

Niki Lauda and James Hunt story was told in *Rush*

It takes a few liberties here and there but the footage makes up for it. Spa in the wet, the original Spa, is a highlight and makes you understand why Jackie Stewart became such a crusader for safety.

It was everything *Rush* wasn't. It was real. It felt real and looked real with Frankenheimer's attention to detail making sure that everything worked. Unlike *Rush*, circuits weren't passed off as others as he included real footage from the 1965 season, and while I grant you that recreating 1976 four decades later is hard, *Rush* took so many liberties that they may as well have started with a made-up plot anyway. Still, non-motor racing fans seem to like it so who are we to argue?

And what about *Le Mans '66*, the new kid on the block? It's long and starts badly with factual inaccuracies over Carroll Shelby, but it gets better and better. Christian Bale is excellent as Ken Miles (who finally gets overdue recognition) and although it is a bit too long, it is a watchable film, which has recreated Le Mans from the period incredibly well.

But, what if you only have time for one film before you dash off for your jab? It has to be *Le Mans*. Those first 30 minutes, devoid of proper dialogue but full of atmosphere, engine noise and atmosphere is enough to make you want to prolong any lockdown.

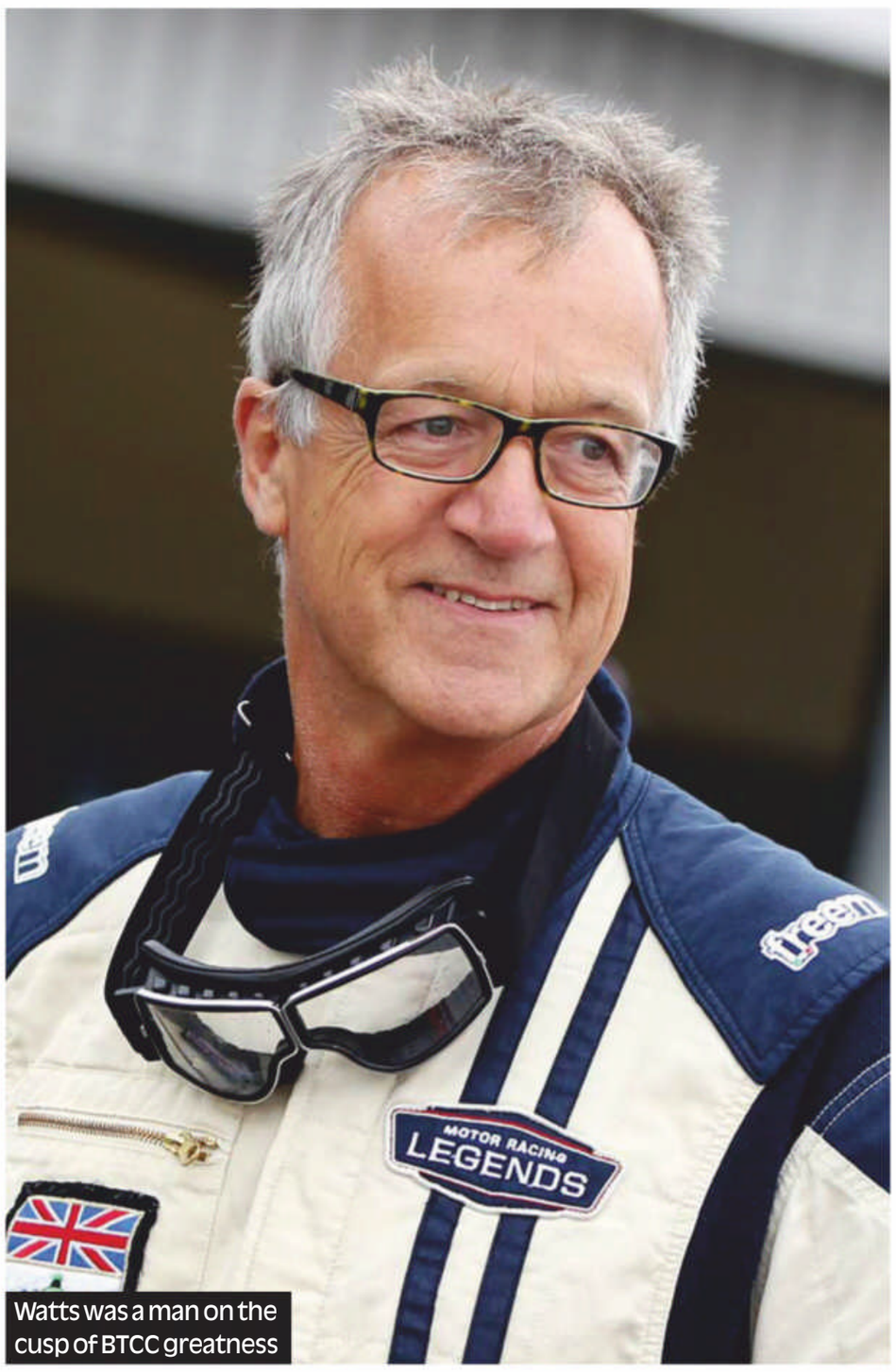
"Perhaps Steve McQueen's Le Mans is better now thanks to nostalgia"

Advertising enquiries: 01233 228753

FEATURE

PATRICK WATTS: MAYBE I WASN'T PUSHY ENOUGH

Touring car hero tells Matt James that he regrets not shouting louder about his ability at the wheel



Watts was a man on the cusp of BTCC greatness

Peugeot was the plucky underdog at the height of the British Touring Car Championship's boom time of the mid-1990s, and it had a driver who was perfectly fitted to that mould.

Patrick Watts had been a product of the hugely competitive one-make landscape in the UK and was a multiple title winner on his way up through the ranks.

There had been an early taste of the big time when he was signed by the Austin Rover Group as it sought to boost the image of the grandma's favourite car, the Metro. The rug was pulled from under his feet when ARG backed out of racing in 1984, but Watts wasn't finished.

The Kent racer would get another shot at the BTCC, firstly with Mazda in 1992 and then as a Peugeot factory driver for four seasons. Although it never quite delivered him the results his ability merited, Watts was a mainstay of the category during arguably its most competitive era.

Since then, he has broadened his motorsport horizons and even won the Historic Rally Championship in a Sunbeam Tiger.

He has become one of the favourites in historic racing too, hauling his Studebaker, Allard and Mini around with great aplomb.

The motorsporting challenges haven't stopped, and there is a second-generation Watts talent to nurture in 2021. Patrick is a long way from slowing down just yet, as you can discover here.

Question: How did the motor racing passion begin in you? Was it something you grew up with?
John Charles
Via email

Patrick Watts: "I started my motor racing career by hillclimbing. It was in a Mini. My dad was doing it with his friend, and I wanted to take part too. My brother bought this Mini Miglia, but he didn't really understand the technical parts of it like pumping the tyres up and changing the spark plugs occasionally. I was only 17, but I knew about things like that so I gradually took over the car. I borrowed a van from a garage down the road and it went from there.

"I was leading the Guyson British championship in 1977 but I had no money, so the car was on the same slicks that had been fitted to it when it was bought. Eventually the front ones were down on the canvas. At Loton Park towards the end of the championship, I put the back tyres on the front to try and alleviate the wear issue a bit. The rear tyres were very grippy on the front, but the front tyres on the back were shot, so I was oversteering everywhere. I had a big oversteer moment into the first long left-hander there and I ended up upside down in the pond there after hitting a tree. I remember all the water coming into the car! I managed to escape though. But that was the end of that Mini."

MN: Why did you decided to move on to the circuits then?

PW: "Because I used to go to Brands Hatch and watch the Minis: people like Chris Tyrrell and Steve Hall and all those guys. I thought what I would do was try to try to find a Mini bodyshell and build all the various bits and pieces into a Mini 850. And I did. I was sponsored by Nick Whiting at All Car Equipe: he gave me a lot of stuff at cost price – there was never much money that changed hands. I went racing and I couldn't believe, after a couple of races, I was beating my heroes. I did half a year in that first season and then did a full year in 1979 and I won the title. All the others had disc brakes and I only had drum brakes on mine."

MN: Maybe that is why you were so fast: you couldn't slow down...!

PW: "Well, that is what happened the first time I ever led a race at Donington Park. We were all going into the chicane and braked at the same point as the others – I ended up sailing straight past the others who had disc brakes…They had all slowed down and I hadn't. I led by accident!"

Question: Did you set out with the intention of being a professional driver, or was it just a fun thing for you to be doing?
James Hilton
Via email

PW: "I was just having fun. I was never really interested in single-seaters, I always just loved saloon cars. My dad always used to drag me up to Brands Hatch – mainly to get me out of my mum's hair – where he would volunteer as a doctor. He would stick me in the press box section at the front of the main grandstand. I was there with my packed lunch and got to watch all the racing.

"When I won the Mini 850 Championship in 1979, [two-time BTCC title winner] Richard Longman was helping me with the engine. Well, I won the 850 Championship but I lost the overall title to Steve Soper, who was in the 1275GTs that year. And the overall winner, the Mini class driver with the most points, won a new car that year so I just missed out. I was skint and I really wanted – well *needed* – that prize: I had a badge on my overalls that looked like a Visa card and it read: 'Live now, pay later'. That was what I was doing at the time! There was a scrutineering issue on the second-to-last race and I lost 10 points, and that was a hammer blow for me. I ended up more into debt.

"Then Richard Longman persuaded me into the 1275GTs for 1980. We put together some sponsors and I came second in that too. I would have won it, but on the last race against Steve Harris I melted a piston in qualifying and so I was down on power. I hung on to Steve Harris's slipstream throughout the race and went down the inside into the last corner at Mallory Park, and the race was mine. But he just drove me straight into the wall and took the front wheel off my

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Gary Hawkins, Motorsport Images

Watts has returned to the wheel of a Metro Turbo in historic racing

Edenbridge-run CRX brought title glory

Watts and team-mate Eugene O'Brien in 1994

car. I went up to him afterwards to complain that he'd had me off. I remember him turning around to me and saying 'as I see it Patrick, I won and you lost' and he walked away. I realised I was playing with the big boys."

MN: And then you went to the new Metro Challenge? Was that quite a leap for you in terms of budget?

PW: "I got backing from Dutton Forshaw: they gave me £12,000 and a van to tow it around with. Longman supplied the engine. Again, I came second to Steve Soper in the championship. It was a struggle initially because my car was down on performance because I didn't realise all the tricks you needed to use to work with the hydrogas suspension. I remember Steve coming past me in qualifying and I couldn't believe how fast he was around the corners without leaning over. I wasted a couple of meetings learning what you did to get the suspension to work. When I did, I caught on, I beat Steve quite a lot of times. I was second the following year too, behind Dave Carvell but I think the Austin Rover Group [ARG] and John Davenport realised that I did it on a very low budget. I got the works deal to drive the Metros in the British Saloon Car Championship [BSCC] to run with Roger Dowson Engineering. I thought I had arrived."

MN: What were they like to race: you've said they had some pretty bonkers suspension. Were they actually enjoyable?

PW: "Oh yes. They were very competitive in their class for a half-hour race in the BSCC, but put them out for any longer than that and they started to struggle a bit. The tyres would wear out and throw the treads off and the whole car would get too hot."

MN: Then you had the rug pulled from under you when ARG went off in a huff following the exclusion of Steve Soper's Rover from the 1983 BSCC points…did you think at that point it was all over?

PW: "Yes, and I had been leading the championship when ARG pulled out. I wanted to get back into [the BSCC], of course, but there weren't many works drives around then. Everybody else was in there with money. Most drivers had a connection or a dealership. I realised that I'd been lucky to get into it at that stage. I don't think many people were paid to be there in the early 1980s. It was probably only Steve, James Weaver and I."

Question: You were the king of one-make racing in the latter part of the 1980s and into the early 1990s. Were they some of the most enjoyable times of your career?
Russell Scobbie
Via email

PW: "I went into Honda CRX Challenge in 1988 when it was introduced and I won that. I went back for the second year and did some races with Mardi Gras and then joined Edenbridge for 1990. Peter Briggs at Edenbridge offered me the drive and it wasn't going to cost anything, but I had already committed to the new-for-1990 Mazda MX-5 Cup because I had been approached by a dealership in Rugby to race for them. We looked at the dates and none of them clashed, so I did them both. I won both titles that year."

MN: But they were very different cars, though: it must have taken you a while to adapt from one to the other?

PW: "Well, it was also the first time I had raced a rear-wheel-drive car with the Mazda MX-5. They were both very high profile and well thought of championships: there was the likes of David Leslie, Barrie Williams, Andy Ackerley and Tim Sugden in there along with all the one-make experts. It was lined with top, top drivers."

MN: As part of your career, was it part of a stepping-stone to get back to the British Touring Car Championship or were you just along for the ride?

PW: "I always wanted to do touring cars, but it was just out of reach unless someone came along and gave you the money to do it. The BTCC then, when ARG pulled out, just turned into a privateer club racing thing. Then it became all Ford Sierra Cosworths, and they were all privateers too. That was all down to money. OK, Karl Jones got a deal with Duckhams, but it was loads of very rich guys. I never sought to have a Sierra Cosworth, that was way beyond my dreams."

"Touring cars were just out of my reach"

Watts's early career

MN: You would have been spectacular in a Cossie…

PW: "I would have loved that, certainly!"

MN: So how come you won the Esso Production saloon title in 1991 – a deal which opened the relationship with Peugeot…?

PW: "That was Richard Longman's deal, and he was asked to drive the 309. It had a Longman engine and it was all put together by the Peugeot factory and [Peugeot's] Des O'Dell, but Longman told them to put me in the car and he would come in and share for the two-driver races. We won that title too."

Question: Getting back to the BTCC in 1992 happened at just the right time in terms of the series' growth. What prompted your return?
Jon Wood
Via email

PW: "I had a relationship with Mazda because of what I had done in the MX-5s. I had a relationship with Shell, which had backed the Peugeot 309. It worked for Dunlop too, because I was the only driver who had stood up for them when they were coming under attack at the start of the MX-5 series: people were saying they were too fragile when drivers locked up. I had a solution to that – don't lock up! So I had four friends there: Roger Dowson from Metro days, Mazda, Shell and Dunlop."

MN: When that programme started, it did seem like it was maybe a bit under-prepared and maybe underfunded too?

PW: "It was totally underfunded, and we had the wrong engine to start with, and that didn't get better until the Xedos came out the following year with the V6. That worked! But even with the Xedos, it was a low-budget car. It was a low-budget team. We didn't do a lot of testing.

"Roger built and designed the car and I remember going up to his workshop and he was working out where the rear wheels were going by putting a wheel on the end of a broom handle. The wheel and suspension was held up with this broom handle while he welded bits in place…that is what it was like. I think you'd call it old-school engineering."

MN: But it almost seemed appropriate for you as a driver: you were an underdog, a fan favourite, and someone who overcame any obstacles that were put in your way…

PW: "I took every chance as it came. I could have been in with Kieth Odor and Nissan in 1991. They asked me to drive, and I went to see them in Salisbury, but unfortunately I had already signed with Mazda. They only ran one car instead of two in 1991. I also had a phone call from Alan Gow, who, at that stage, worked for Andy Rouse. He asked me to go and see them and they wanted me to drive in that Toyota. If all those phone calls had have happened at different times, I would have been in with Andy in the Carina for 1991."

MN: Is that regret?

continued on page 16

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FEATURE

PW: "Oh absolutely, I would have loved to have raced alongside Andy. It was a winning car."

Question: Did you ever get to drive the full Super Touring-spec Mazda 323F that came later? Did you think that could have been competitive?
Kelsey Ingram
Via email
PW: "Roger Dowson built that for Slim Borgudd. The orange one. That had the V6 in it. Unfortunately, Borgudd didn't have the money to pay for it so it never went out and it was parked. That was actually built for the Swedish championship, but I didn't get to drive it."

Question: Snetterton's British Touring Car Championship race in the Xedos in 1993 – you were on pole position, but it all went wrong. What actually happened?
Emma Facey
Via email
PW: "Steve Soper was alongside me on the run to Riches and Steve was on the outside of me. I had slightly cold tyres and therefore the back stepped out, like it does. Steve was three-quarters of the way past me and very close to my front wheel. The natural reaction would have been to put opposite lock on and get out of the slide, but if I had have done that, I would have taken Steve out too. I just couldn't do that. That was a real shame, I had been looking forward to that race and the car was very fast around Snetterton. I had been very surprised to have put it on pole position but I like the track and it obviously suited the car."

Question: I remember Patrick Watts in the BTCC: he was brilliant. Does Patrick have a favourite and a worst race that he participated in?
Andrew Rankin
Via Facebook
PW: "Well the worst races were the ones where the car broke down through no fault of mine, and that happened quite a lot! They were endless. One of my best I think was at Snetterton in 1995. We were on the grid and the heavens opened and we were all on slicks. Everybody went around to the pits to put wets on. But by the time we were forming up on the grid for the green flag lap, it was drying. I went back into the pits and put slicks on – as did a few other people – but that meant I had to start from the back of the grid. I carved my way through the pack to eventually come second. I went past [reigning champion] Gabriele Tarquini and all these people. Kelvin Burt won the race. What frustrated me was, after coming from the back to second was I thought I did that as the only one on slicks! To find that all the 'star' drivers I had passed were also on slicks just reminded me what I could do if I had have been in one of their cars...

"There is also something else that sticks in my mind. In those days of 1996, you would go testing the week before the race and I remember the whole circus going up to Brands Hatch ahead of a Grand Prix circuit meeting. We were quickest in testing in the wet in the morning, but that didn't surprise me because I liked the wet. I remember some friends from New Zealand came along to see me and they were telling me how well I was doing. I told them that when it dried up in the afternoon, I would probably slip down to 12th or something.

"It did dry, but all through the day, I was quickest or second quickest. I was trading times with Jo Winkelhock. I spoke to the engineer at the debrief and he asked what the car was doing wrong, and I said it had a slight amount of understeer at Druids, but that was it. The rest of the track was fantastic, it was on tip-toes through the fast stuff and it was the best thing out there. It was a revelation. They had put a new differential in it, and I thought that was the secret. Wow: we had cracked it.

"That week, [Peugeot team-mate] Tim Harvey tested with it and didn't have any success with it. Come the race weekend, it just understeered everywhere and I qualified in my usual place. The mystery is that we never got that performance back again. I don't know what the team had done on that test day, but they had nailed it. When we replicated that set-up on the race car, it was nowhere. It was a pig again, like it always was.

I had that glimpse there, that moment of seeing the speed in that package and it was fabulous, but we could never get it back again. It was so frustrating. The potential was there."

"I had a glimpse of how good it could be"

Watts on the 406

The Mazda title came in 1990

The 406: Watts enjoyed a four-year spell with French manufacturer

On top of the one-make world: Watts was a winner in CRX Challenge

Watts: an approachable figure

Question: Of all the team-mates you had in the British Touring Car Championship, who was the best one? And why?
Adam Stokes
Via Facebook
PW: "Funnily enough, I didn't have many: I was usually in a single-car team. Thinking about this, I would have to say Tony Pond when I was racing the Metro in 1983. That gets me out of a difficult question, doesn't it? But I loved Tony, he was an absolute professional and he taught me a little bit about politics. I was very young and very naïve back then, and he was always there for advice. We had to battle a little bit with the politics of a professional works team. I think his advice was 'keep your mouth shut Patrick and just drive'."

Question: Why did you leave the Peugeot British Touring Car Championship team at the end of 1997?
Scott Ambrose
Via Facebook
Question: What was Patrick's thoughts of the Andy Rouse Toyota Corolla he tested: could it have been competitive?
Paul Cunningham
Via Facebook
PW: "Paul Radisich had talked his way into the drive. They got rid of Richard Longman as the engine builder and they were looking for excuses why it wasn't winning anything. But it seemed the person doing all the sackings and the one changing things was the one who should have been falling on his sword. So Radisich got in there and proved he was not the saviour of anything…"
MN: Did you knock on any other doors when the Peugeot thing fell over?
PW: "Before the end of the Peugeot deal, I got approached by Alfa Romeo but that never happened – they took Derek Warwick instead and that proved to be a disaster. There was an offer from Andy Rouse again to go and test his newly built Toyota Corolla. I drove the car at Snetterton and it was great and very fast. We both went away to look for sponsorship because Toyota didn't want to back it. This would have been for 1998. But it just never materialised."

Question: It must have been great to have been a home-grown driver in the BTCC in the period when all the manufacturers were looking to overseas stars. Did you feel like you were waving the flag for Britain?
Ed Sleigh
Via email
PW: "It was good. But it seemed at the time that if a driver had a foreign-sounding name, all of a sudden it would give them half-a-second a lap according to the team managers. But there was a whole wealth of UK talent out there and they were proven, because we have very competitive one-make series. OK, they might have been diluted a bit since because there are so many of them, but they were really tough nuts to crack back then. You can therefore deduct that anyone who was winning in those categories was going to be pretty good. But there were foreigners turning up with a fancy-sounding name who'd maybe won one thing in their homeland."

Question: What was racing in Australia like? You did Bathurst at the end of 1997, and then carried on out there…
Jack Crowther
Via email
PW: "Bathurst was my last foray with Peugeot. It was a very sad time, really. I went out there and I share my car with Neil Crompton and he blew the engine up on the very first lap he did. That was the test engine and they only had two engines. Therefore we had to run around on just three cylinders to just learn the track. Then they put the race engine in for qualifying and I did the shootout. I was in the top 10, and that was only my 12th lap around the circuit. Paul Radisich, who was sharing the other Peugeot with Tim Harvey, was miles off the pace and he knew the place like the back of his hand.

"Although we failed to finish the race, it was a lovely circuit: I think I clicked with it because it was like a bit of hillclimbing mixed with the Silverstone Grand Prix track. I needed more laps though, but I proved that I was a better driver than Radisich. Radisich didn't say anything in the debriefs, I was leading the technical side, and I told the Peugeot people that too. I asked them to change their mind [about signing him]. They didn't."
MN: And you went back to race in Australia in the Peugeot 406?
PW: "A guy over there called Paul Grimm, he did a deal with Peugeot to take the 1998 cars and everything to Australia: the cars, all the parts, the anoraks, the mechanics' overalls, everything. He was hoping that Peugeot Australia were going to back the cars, but they wanted to see some performance first. There was due to be a race supporting the Formula 1 race in Melbourne, but that never happened and Peugeot got cold feet. Paul had seen me drive at Bathurst, and he got me out there to do three races in 1999 in an effort to get people interested in the programme. I was in Tim Harvey's old car. I won at Lakeside and got two second places at Oran Park before it all came to an end and I had to come home for work reasons."

Question: What are Patrick's memories of racing a Peugeot 106 in New Zealand?
Graeme Swan
Via Facebook
MN: How did that come about and when was it?
PW: "It was about 1990. It came about

"I was always too modest as a driver"

Watts on himself

Watts attacking the Snetterton kerbs in the Pegueot 405 in 1994

Mazda Xedos in 1993: Snetterton is one of the races that got away...

Old pals act: Watts heads Steve Soper in the 1992 BTCC

through my old next-door neighbour in the UK, who had emigrated to New Zealand when he was 10 with his family. We kept in contact and he followed my racing career. He basically put the deal together, and Peugeot New Zealand jumped at it and I won all the races over there that I did."

Question: Looking back on your British Touring Car Championship career, do you have any regrets?
Malcolm Munt
Via email

MN: We would guess not winning a race or a championship would be one of them…

PW: "I guess my regret is that I never really had anyone in my family into motorsport and I am down here in Kent. Everybody else had family or friends high up in motorsport who had done it before. You name anybody, they have got connections. I needed a manager: if only someone had adopted me, or I had put myself up for adoption by someone who could have looked after my interests. I needed someone to do my deals and shout where I wasn't shouting. There was so much going on at Peugeot that I couldn't say anything about."

MN: You seemed to have a character and a personality that resonated with the fans trackside and watching on TV. Was that something you worked on?

PW: "I was just myself. I talk to everybody, and I see everybody as an equal. My business employs 200 people and I am as happy cleaning the toilet as I am in the boardroom being a managing director. I am just me.

"I have often thought that you can walk into a touring car race dressed to the nines with two bodyguards, wave away all the fans and everybody thinks 'oh, he is a hero'. You can do that, or you can be modest and sometimes perhaps I was too modest for my own good. I always play myself down and if I had an accident or made a mistake, I said so. To build up an image in motorsport you have got to be slightly unobtainable, you must always brag about yourself and you must never admit a mistake. That's just not me.

"The drivers that I admire are the ones who are honest. For me, that is part of being a racing driver. I wasn't a politician and I didn't big myself up all the time. All I did was drive: I thought motor racing was all about driving, but you have to be involved in so many other areas and you have to be streetwise. Those are the bits I failed on, which means I was not the complete driver."

Question: Patrick, did you enjoy the change from racing to rallying and, apart from another person in the car, what are the biggest differences in attitude or sportsmanship that you found?
Karen Spencer
Via Facebook

PW: "I loved rallying: it is a whole day of motorsport. It encompasses more skills than going around and around in a racing car. Not only must you be able to handle a car, you are also constantly reading the road surface, the corners, listening to the navigator, all of it.

"The old adage that to finish first, first you must finish is never more true than in rallying."

MN: You built that Sunbeam Tiger yourself, didn't you?

PW: "Not quite: initially it was a road car that I built in 1990. Then Richard Asquith converted it into a rally car for me in 2006 and I won it in 2007. That is the car that I am actually putting together now and I am doing the Peking to Paris Rally with it in 2022. This time next year, it will be on its way, in a boat, to the other side of the world."

MN: You seem addicted to racing: there is no sign of you stopping, though, is there?

Watt was a stage regular in his Tiger

PW: "The big thing will be racing in the Citroen C1 long-distances events with my daughter Aimee, who is 25. I enjoy the racing with the C1s. We did three races last year and she is a total novice.

"I gave her a book on how to drive a racing car by Jackie Stewart and she was coming back and was asking all the right questions about the rollbars, the rollcentres and what happens if you change them, all that sort of thing. She understood it all and was questioning me about all aspects of it. I am looking forward to doing as many races as we can in the Citroen and we will have great fun. I will help out with funding the C1s, but if she wants to go further than that, then it is down to her!" ■

Watts was part of the BTCC Masters race at Donington Park in 2004

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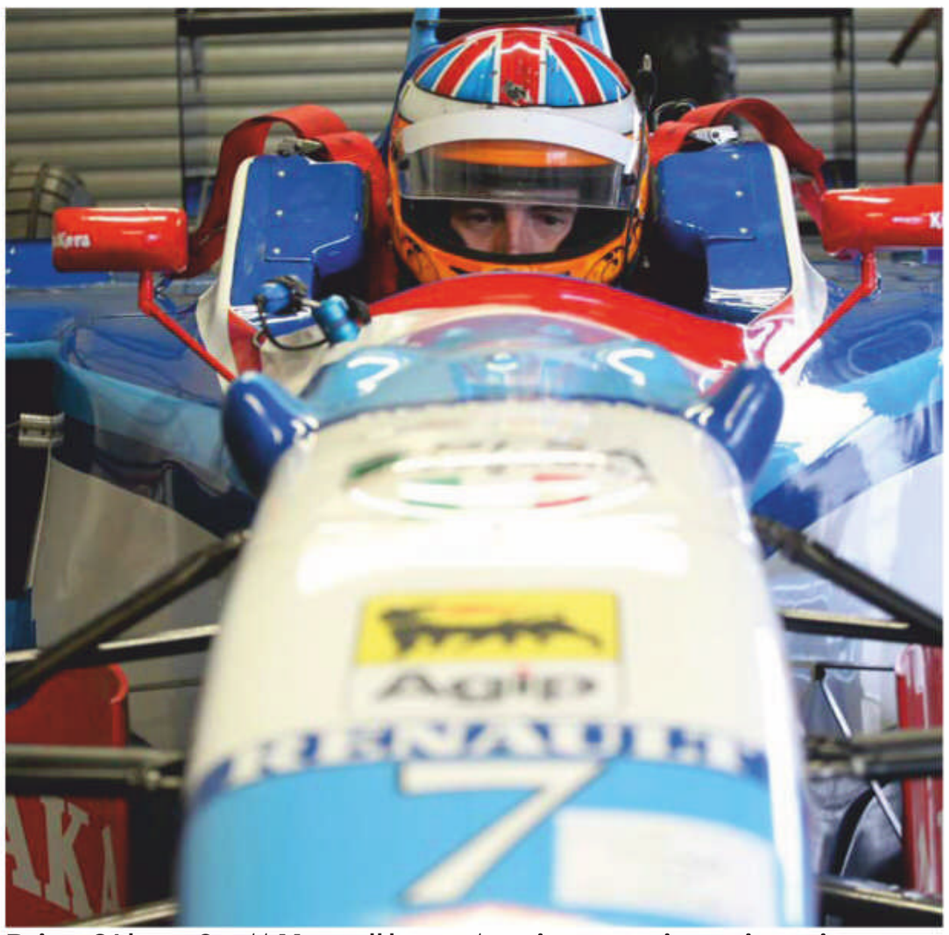
FEATURE

HOW TO BE BEST OF THE BEST IN F1 ESPORTS

British GT frontrunner James Baldwin and Driver61 boss Scott Mansell tell Graham Keilloh about their masterclass to get F1 2020 video gamers to the very top

Baldwin can help F1 2020 racers get faster



Driver61 boss Scott Mansell has extensive experience in racing cars

You could hardly fail to notice on the motorsport landscape the growing presence, and extreme competitiveness, of sim racing and Esports, boosted in the last 12 months by Covid's implications for our movements.

Scott Mansell, head of the Driver61 driver development business, and a EuroBOSS champion and former Indy Lights racer, indeed noticed, and did so pre-Covid. So he started creating specific coaching courses for sim racers.

"Driver61 started in the area of sim racing [at] the start of 2020," he tells Motorsport News. "I already had an idea that a percentage of our audience were sim drivers just from the comments we see on YouTube and inquiries that we would have through the website.

"So it was just a natural progression and it's a big market in its own right. It was a way for us to take the assets and the knowledge that we had in motorsport and put it into a different area of sim racing.

"Our general outlook is that the two worlds are already quite close together in terms of transferable skills and they're only going to get closer," Mansell continues. "The battles that you have out there are real; you could argue that it's a purer form of motorsport because it can be more equal. And I was amazed when we ran the first trial coaching sessions, the quality of the driver was fantastic."

And the official Formula 1 video game, F1 2020, is prominent in Esports racing, with even its own official international contest that's broadcast live. Mansell wanted to offer a tailored course to help people get into the very top echelon of that game's racers, and brought in James Baldwin to help. It's now live as the F1 2020 Masterclass.

Baldwin is not only a champion sim racer and McLaren competitor in the F1 Esports contest mentioned, he also adapted astonishingly to real-life competition in British GT last year, winning on debut then contending for the overall title. Yet Mansell thought of Baldwin before these real-life exploits.

"We'd been aware of James for quite a while because of the [YouTube] content that he produces and his World's Fastest Gamer title," Mansell explains. "With this course [on] F1 2020, there are certain things that are quite game-specific, so we needed some assistance and we wanted the best driver out there and someone who had the ability to coach as well. Relying very heavily on James's knowledge, we built the course together. He was the obvious choice. I've actually been even more impressed since we've known him and especially what he did last year with the real-world stuff."

Baldwin tells MN: "Scott and Mike [Winter] told me about this course they were making, it hadn't been developed in any way. They formed a little team to get all the information down, do the tutorials, the demonstrations. Scott [is] interested how the skills can compare from sim to real life, so I'm quite fortunate that I can talk about that quite fresh in the memory.

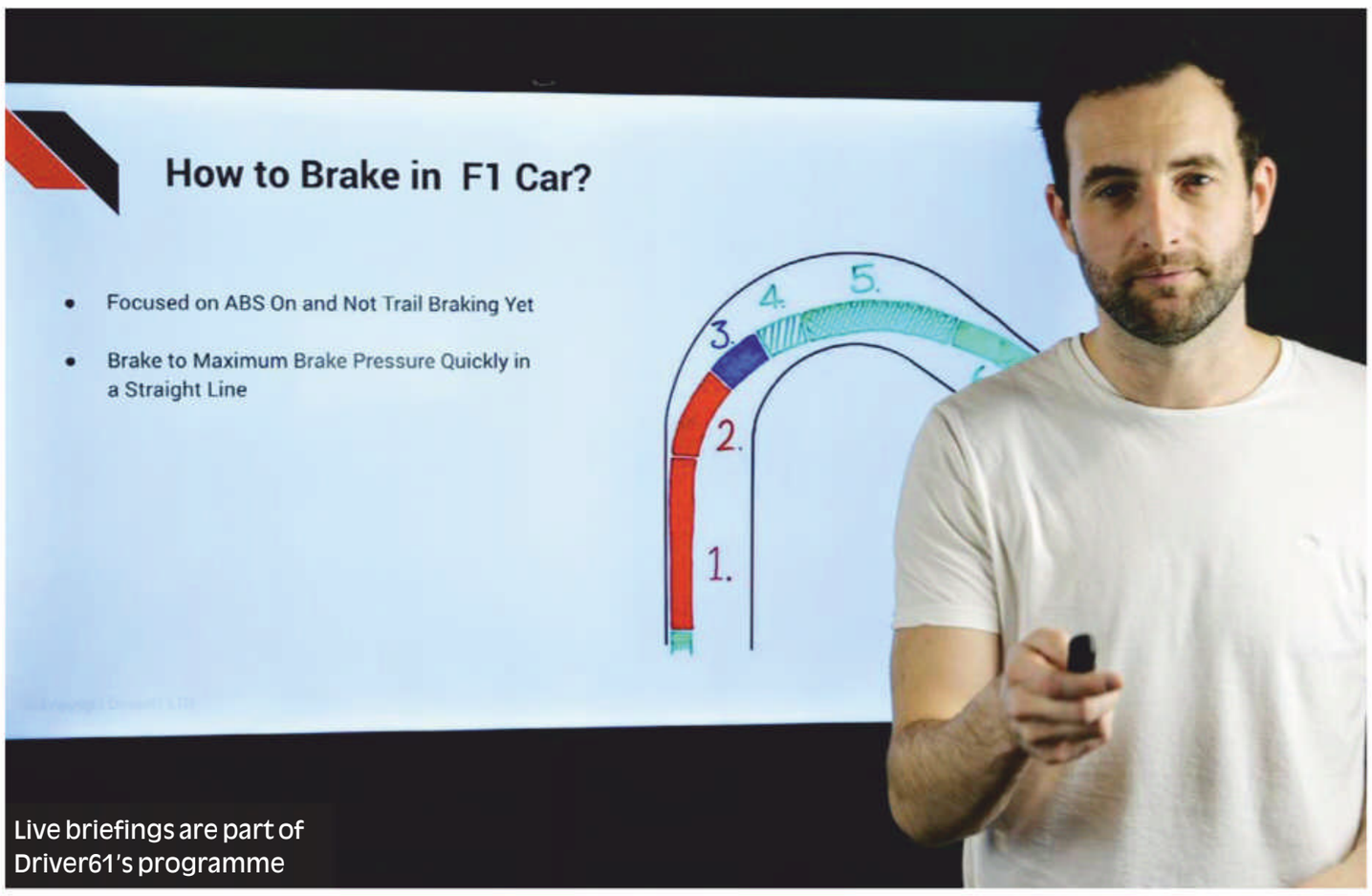
"[The course is] the first of its kind, no-one's really done it before, so we wanted to make sure it was right. It took quite a lot of development."

The course was developed during 2020 and the first cohort has run, with the next starting imminently. Currently it focuses on braking; modules on areas such as steering, racecraft and vision may follow.

"We do a big research period first of all," Mansell notes. "We define the problems within that platform, we interview a load of drivers, James actually got out there and did some one-to-one coaching as well to really understand what the issues were, and then we package all of that into a step-by-step breakdown of how to be fast, and that's where we add the value at Driver61.

"The problem is with real world and sim racing drivers, because they probably

Photos: Driver61, Jakob Ebrey



Live briefings are part of Driver61's programme

Driver61 has recently added data logging to its course to help people find pace on the F1 2020 game

Baldwin alongside Michael O'Brien adapted quickly to British GT

think that they're a great driver already, they just go out and push as hard as they can go and they don't learn the underlying refined technique, so that's why we break things down."

"It's not normal coaching," Mansell insists. "It's a step on from that. I coached at the tracks for 10 years sitting next to people on test days and looking at data, and it isn't the best way to coach. Breaking things down, layering skills up like people do in other sports, 80% fundamentals, get them perfect, and then tweak the last bit.

"What we teach in the course is not to brake at this point, turn at this point, hit this apex. It's giving the drivers the tools to figure that out themselves. We do this across all our training. Because if you're just copying someone you're never going to be as fast as them and also when the tyres start to go off or the fuel weight starts to come out you can't adapt to it properly.

"We do that across our real-world training, the iRacing [another sim game] training, the F1 training, we do Assetto Corsa, and we take the same principles. If you want to get into that top 1%, if you want to get within half a percent of James, you need to get a step back, get everything fluid and flowing with your style."

Baldwin notes: "Scott is really good at that. I learn stuff from his videos because I never really thought about certain things like how you come off the brake."

"James is being pretty humble there," Mansell counters. "We've worked with or viewed a lot of sim drivers and he is probably the most adaptable one that I've seen. With sim driving, one of the pros is that you get unlimited test time, but one of the negatives is that you get unlimited test time! So you have drivers that just are fast because they memorise everything.

"This is why James did so well in British GT because he understands the physics of the car and he can adapt his technique to suit and that puts him apart from some of the other sim drivers."

The course provides documentation plus live briefing sessions from Mansell and Baldwin where you learn about the technical depth such as in trail braking or manipulating the grip. Then there are hours of set exercises on the track where you put these things into practice.

"That's where the magic happens," Mansell adds, "because you're trying to put some conscious awareness on a technique which is incredibly difficult to do, but you have to do that and probably drive round a bit slower and put attention on it, get the technique right and then repeat it and repeat it so that it becomes automatic, and then you can move onto the next thing."

There are also one-to-one or small group training packages, and Driver61 also recently acquired hotlaps.io and has added data logging and analysis software to its F1 2020 offering.

"One great thing about sim racing is that you have a bit more flexibility in how you can coach," Mansell adds. "You can choose whichever circuit you want, you can do whatever you want on that circuit, there isn't any traffic, it doesn't cost £35,000 a day to hire! So you have scope to be a lot more creative in how you train."

So how has Baldwin found the transition into coaching? "When I started doing this with Scott and Driver61 I knew what I was talking about but I didn't know how to translate it to someone who's just starting out," he admits.

"I've developed that skill, Scott and the guys have definitely helped me because Driver61 has an array of coaches that specialise in different games and stuff.

"It's a skill that I didn't have before and I enjoy doing it, giving something back, and it does make you reflect on your own driving a little bit more. So when I am sim racing myself or competing I'll go the extra 1%, it's a win-win situation.

"You can't see yourself as a GT3 driver or an F1 Esports driver, I'm just a driver doing different things, and if I know more overall then it's going to help. I've noticed one example, I can jump from a single-seater situation with downforce to a GT car with no downforce pretty quickly and easily now and I understand what I need to do differently from one car to another."

And both Mansell and Baldwin are convinced that sim racing, and its coaching, is only going to grow. "F1 Esports [is] clearly the biggest racing Esport and in five years' time it could be one of the biggest Esports in the world with the backing of Formula 1," Baldwin says. "There's going to be more people hungry to figure out how you be fast. It's growing exponentially every year. And it's not easy, it took me about two years and lots of learning from fast guys, lots of graft, and I'm not even the quickest.

"I suppose there will be more of these courses coming out [from others], [but we] have a real advantage because we've found the niche so early and it's already heavily developed."

Mansell adds: "It's a really exciting area to be in, not only with the F1 stuff but with the other platforms. We're piecing together a youth programme at the moment as well, because we're finding that karters are using sim racing as a complement, we're just going to see more and more of that.

"We'll see more coaches doing remote training but in all honesty we're so developed with our training programmes that we're three or four years ahead." ■

How Mansell helped Baldwin's stunning British GT debut

The scale of sim racing convert James Baldwin's achievements in his British GT freshman 2020 year should not be understated. Paired with Michael O'Brien in a Jenson Team Rocket RJN McLaren 720S GT3, and with minimal preparation, Baldwin won the season-opening race at Oulton Park.

He might even have gone on to take the championship had the odd card not fallen against him. Whatever was the case, Baldwin looked like he utterly belonged throughout and it all went way beyond reasonable expectations. Even team co-owner Jenson Button was impressed.

It astonished Scott Mansell too, who had given Baldwin some pointers before his victorious Oulton debut. "He'd not been to Oulton before in the real world, he only had very limited testing," Mansell recalls to MN, "and he was like 'I'm going to take it easy, just going to get some miles under my belt'. And then they go and get the result that they got! I thought you can't contain that racing driver!"

Mansell also offered a nugget for one such as Baldwin who is more used to sim racing. "[It was] a piece of advice that was really really useful," Baldwin notes to MN. "I was asking him a few questions and he said one point that's stuck in my head and I've used it at every round.

"[He said] If you want to brake later you can't just do what you do on a sim and brake later, end up in the barrier and escape and restart. You have to brake where you are currently, but brake harder and if you stop early then brake later. That's a big part of why I didn't shunt all year long, so cheers Scott!"

Mansell laughs: "OK, so I take all the credit for that!"

Sim convert Baldwin won on his Oulton Park British GT debut

Baldwin wowed in the real world

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FEATURE

The two-time world beater has been tempted back

Familiar home: Alonso will return to Renault, now Alpine

WHY FERNANDO ALONSO BELIEVES HE WILL GALVANISE THE ALPINE ATTACK IN F1

Spaniard is returning to the team formerly known as Renault, and he has high hopes. By Scott Mitchell

Alonso has spread his wings and tackled the Indy 500 two times

The first time Fernando Alonso was at Renault he drove for the team for four seasons and won two world titles. The second time it was a marriage of convenience, a two-year stop-gap that yielded just a couple of wins and one of Formula 1's greatest scandals with the controversy of the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix.

Sequels are tough enough but the third part of a trilogy is particularly challenging. And as F1 waits for the third act of 'Alonso at Renault' to begin in 2021, a pragmatic prediction would be that it will be difficult for this stint to even match the success of 2008 and 2009 (minus 'Crashgate'), let alone replicate the glory days of the early years of Alonso's career.

Alonso signed his deal to reunite with Renault out of a mutual need for one another. Renault was too unconvincing in the F1 midfield to persuade one of the leading drivers for a rival team to jump ship. And Alonso didn't have a route back to F1 with a race-winning team.

So Alonso weighed up his options and found two reasons to believe in the team that will now be known as Alpine: "One, in terms of expectations and building something from the midfield to the top, it was very attractive, very appealing. And secondly because I know everyone in this team. It's the third time I've come here and I knew I would feel at home here."

There are some significant differences between the Renault that Alonso won with, and the current version. For starters, it's not going to race as Renault – Alonso will spearhead the first year of the Alpine brand in F1. But a lot of the people are the same, the Renault corporate involvement is technically the same, and it's the same Enstone base of operations albeit considerably upgraded in the dozen or so years since Alonso last visited.

Alonso himself is a different driver, too. He is now much closer to the finishing line in his top-level racing career than he is the starting lights, he has been out of F1 for two seasons – and he didn't have a full racing programme at all in 2020.

Shortly after his return was announced last year, Alonso said none of that mattered. He'd become the World Endurance champion since leaving F1, added a second Le Mans 24 Hours victory to his CV, and took part in the Dakar Rally and was preparing for another crack at the Indianapolis 500.

"I feel ready and I feel at 100% in terms of driving," Alonso says. "We did a couple of fitness tests [last summer] and had the best results ever in my career.

"I'm extremely motivated, happy, and stronger than ever."

While Alonso has undertaken a rigorous programme to familiarise himself with grand prix cars, he has kept himself sharp with disciplined, competitive efforts elsewhere.

For example, ex-Renault engineering director Pat Symonds says of Alonso's experience driving Toyota's WEC challenger: "It was fascinating to get his insights into how he had learned to drive the LMP1 car, and particularly with the energy regeneration on that car, how he'd discovered things that the other drivers hadn't discovered.

"They'd been driving it for a while, he came along and said, 'If I do this, if I do that, if I lift here and brake here, I've actually got more energy to play with.' He's very, very good with things like that."

In 2020 Alonso also took part in the Indianapolis 500 for a second time and then the final part of his year was spent throwing himself into the learning process at Renault, driving its 2018 car and controversially taking part in the post-season Abu Dhabi rookie test.

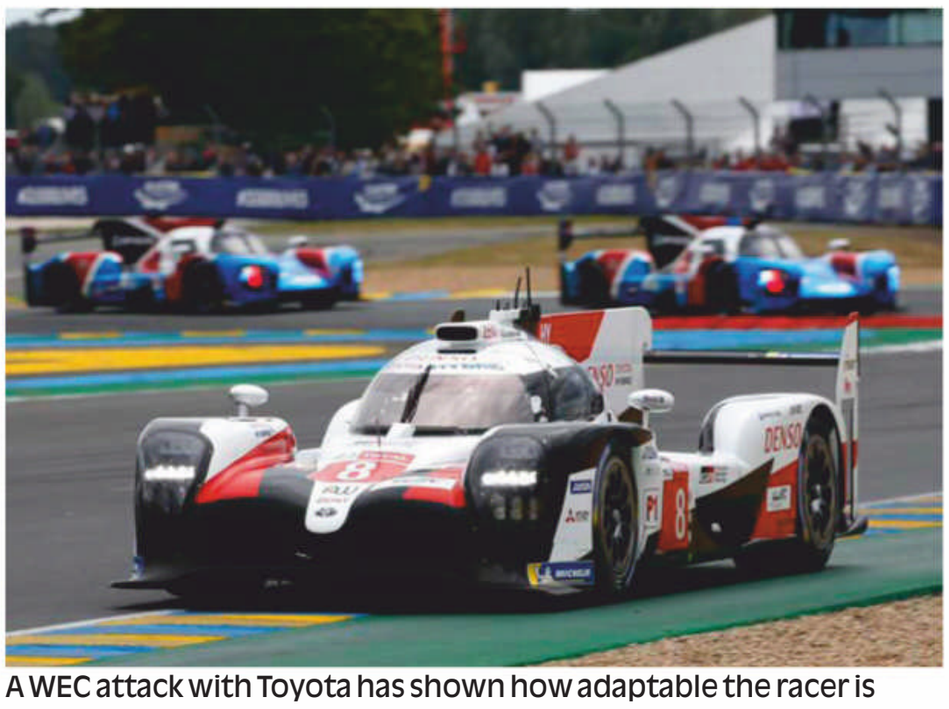
Alonso believes he learned something from every extracurricular experience. That could play to one of Alonso's greatest strengths, evident in F1 and in his multi-disciplined sabbatical: his adaptability.

"I consider myself to be quite complete – maybe I score nine in everything," he says. "Maybe there's a faster driver in wet conditions or on

Photos: Motorsport Images

Spaniard made his race debut for Renault in 2003

Alonso's first world title came in 2005



A WEC attack with Toyota has shown how adaptable the racer is

Alonso won with the Renault F1 team in *that* Singapore GP in 2008

Saturday or at the start, one that's better than me. But I think I'm close to the top in many circumstances and categories, and in the championship that's a good thing to have.

"It's like when you have any top athlete doing well in every single category, in the end you win."

And as for his age? "As far as I saw Formula 1 for many years the stopwatch is the only thing that matters. Not the age. I never had a classification [in a] race, based on [my] passport, date of birth. Always on the stopwatch. So hopefully I'm still fast. Faster than them."

Alonso has lost none of the swagger or self-belief that typified his first F1 career, especially in the difficult final McLaren years. He is adamant his net ability as a driver is as good, if not superior, to when he last raced in F1.

That assumes his speed has not dwindled or the added experience he's gained has offset the natural physical decline that comes with age. He is confident. But he is not delusional.

"Honestly, I expect to be straight up to speed," says Alonso. "But I'm aware of the challenge that maybe I face in the first couple of races.

"Not only on pure speed, but also on procedures, steering wheel commands, things that are new for me and could take some time. I'm aware that I could struggle a little bit. But I want to think that it will not happen."

If Alonso did not believe that was a risk he would not have considered it necessary to complete so many days of running last year. It was Alonso who pushed for multiple days in a 2018 Renault in Bahrain and Abu Dhabi, in addition to a filming day in the 2020 car and finally a proper run in the R.S.20 in the post-season Abu Dhabi test – where Alonso was quickest.

Every time Alonso drove, he sought to gain a small advantage.

"After 18 years in Formula 1 and now getting back, it's true that you are missing a little bit the braking points, how quick all the corners arrive, braking performance, cornering speed performance," he said after his first run in the 2020 Renault.

"So there are many things that I need to get used to again. But it will take a shorter period of time than getting used to a completely new thing, like for example Dakar or Indy."

All Alonso's preparations will have limited value though if his car is not good enough to match his ability. Renault missed out in the fight for third in the constructors' championship last year but there were enough signs of positivity for Alonso to start talking more enthusiastically about 2021 – having initially implored the team to abandon this season and focus fully on the new technical rules of 2022.

But once Daniel Ricciardo had finally ended Renault's podium drought last year, Alonso's appetite for the first season of his return seemed to grow. Suddenly, 2021 seemed like much less likely to just be a year treading water – even if the big shift in fortunes for the team will still have to wait until 2022.

"I think the team is in good shape for the future," says Alonso. "I've been delighted to see the improvements.

"We've still got a long way to go and the midfield is very tight but I think the guys have done an amazing job trackside. I am looking forward to being back in the mix.

"We all have high hopes. But at the same time, I think we have to have the feet on the ground, knowing the regulations will be more or less the same until 2022. We know that the deficit all the midfield teams have right now will carry on [in 2021]."

Knowing this move is his last shot at F1 success, Alonso is still keeping the pressure on for '22. He urged Renault to be at work on the new rules in the windtunnel on January 1, 2021 – the first day the rules allowed aero testing to take place for 2022 cars.

With so much changing there is an opportunity for the shrewdest, sharpest operators to get a head start. And Symonds reckons Alonso stands to benefit from that – boosting the chance of his comeback being successful.

"Will the wily old Fernando Alonso be the first to suss out how best to get the performance from that [2022] car? I think the answer will be yes," says Symonds.

"I think he'll be very quick to figure out what matters and what doesn't matter, how to work with the engineers to get the best set-up from the car, how the 18-inch tyres behave differently from the 13-inch – all these kinds of things.

"I think the 2022 car will be good for him because it'll be a bit of reset for everyone. And I think it will help Fernando quite a lot."

Alonso will still need a quality car to have a shot at winning in F1 again, let alone the third title he yearns for. But he cannot do anything on the sidelines, so getting back in the game was vital – even if he was never quite as desperate as returning by any means necessary.

It would be a risky gamble to bet on Alonso's third stint with 'Renault' emulating the results of either of the first two. But all he wants from Alpine is a sniff at success.

If Alonso gets that, all bets are off. ■

> ***"I expect to be straight up to speed"***
>
> **Fernando Alonso**

WILL ALPINE'S CONFUSION UNDERMINE ALONSO?

At the time of writing, the Alpine Formula 1 team boss role is vacant. Cyril Abiteboul has left Renault and title-winning MotoGP convert Davide Brivio has been appointed Alpine's racing director, a position that hasn't existed in that team since 2016 when Fred Vasseur left.

When Vasseur was racing director he was at war with Abiteboul over who actually was in charge of the team. Now the position exists again there is fresh confusion over who calls the shots.

It's pretty clear that Alpine, at least initially, didn't know what to do about its leadership structure following Abiteboul's surprise exit. It is understood to have come unexpectedly at the race team and at corporate level.

Abiteboul never could resist sticking his head above the parapet, often setting incredibly lofty goals and repeatedly under-delivering. It may be that senior people at Alpine, maybe even Alonso himself, believe the team is better off without him and will benefit from the appointment of executive director Marcin Budkowski as team principal.

But Abiteboul did oversee a gradual rise of Renault from a very low base, spent years in charge of a works team, and crucially did the deal to get Alonso back. His expected Alpine CEO role has now gone to Laurent Rossi, a corporate plug-in. There may well be consequences felt from that, short-term and longer-term.

This kind of internal disruption has the potential to leave a person like Alonso displeased – and shortchanged. He is a driver and a man who likes to leave nothing to chance and needs to trust those around him to make the best decisions on matters outside of his control.

This is not the sign of a complete and well-considered reshuffle. Worse still, it has a very real chance of disrupting the momentum Alonso should have benefited from in 2021 – and may undermine his long-term ambitions as well.

Abiteboul: ousted

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FEATURE

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com, Motorsport Images

OGIER AT 50:
THE BEST WINS OF HIS WRC CAREER

Victory on the season-opening Rally Monte Carlo was Sebastien Ogier's 50th in the World Rally Championship. Luke Barry ranks his 10 best so far

Ogier claimed the title on his switch to Volkswagen

When describing rally drivers like Sebastien Ogier, you simply run out of superlatives. With the 2021 season set to be Ogier's last full year of competition in the World championship, surpassing the great Sebastien Loeb's record of nine titles and 79 rally victories looks to be off the table. But there's a strong bank of evidence to suggest Ogier can claim to be the greatest world rally driver of all time.

This season he is targeting world title number eight and by winning the Monte, has now hit the half-century mark in terms of rally wins. Claiming titles for three different manufacturers and rally wins for four, Ogier has proved a versatility than Loeb wasn't able to with the latter's success all coming with Citroen.

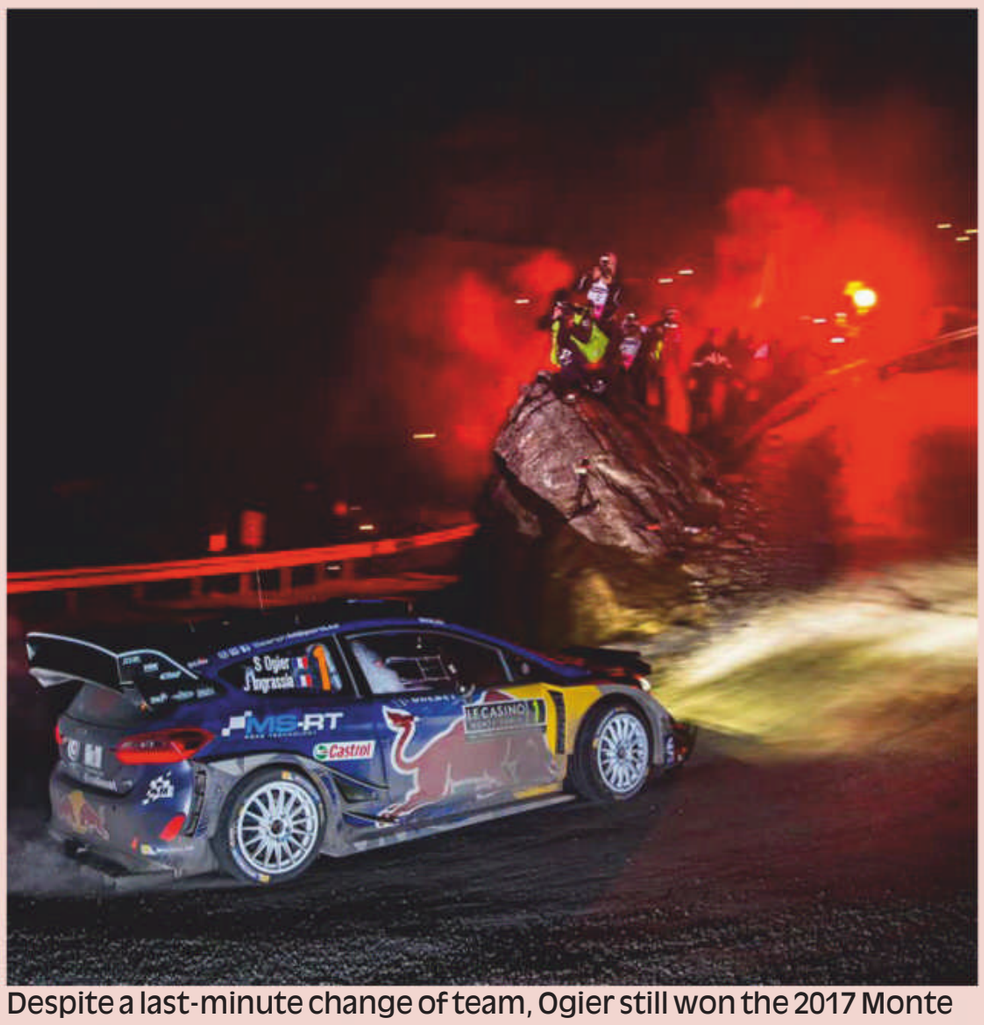
But this feature isn't here to convince you which Sebastien is the greatest; that's a conversation for another day. Instead, MN has decided to look back over Ogier's 50 victories in the WRC and tried to assemble them into a top-10 order of his greatest ever drives. With such an esteemed career, this was no easy task…

8 Rally Monte Carlo 2017

Ogier's home event is the one he wants to win the most, but in 2017 the chances of scoring a fourth consecutive win on Rally Monte Carlo looked bleak given his new surroundings.

The 2017 Monte was the first event of a new regulation cycle, meaning anticipation was high to see which team had done the best job. Ogier had expected to start the rally in a Volkswagen, but the brand's sudden withdrawal from the WRC in late 2016 left Ogier seeking new employment. Malcolm Wilson's M-Sport offered him the lifeline but Ogier was at a disadvantage to his Toyota, Hyundai and Citroen rivals who were all more familiar with their machines than he was with his Ford Fiesta WRC.

As the rally progressed, it mattered not. There was some fortune to Ogier's victory – Neuville throwing away his 51s lead on Saturday's final stage perhaps the prime example – but Ogier's mastery of the conditions rose to the fore as he sent a warning to the WRC that he could indeed win rallies, and ultimately titles, without being sat in the clear fastest car. Ironically, it was his third-largest margin of victory after Sardinia 2015 and Mexico 2013.



Despite a last-minute change of team, Ogier still won the 2017 Monte

Ogier flew to his first WRC victory in a Citroen C4 WRC in 2010

10 Rally Portugal 2010

The first win in a driver's career at any level is always special, but chalking off that first success at WRC level usually opens the floodgates for a prosperous future career.

Ogier's first win came on his 19th start in a top-spec Citroen C4 WRC and came off the back of a second spot on Rally New Zealand that could very easily have also yielded his maiden triumph instead. Ogier headed to Portugal in a determined mood, and took the lead on SS4 (of 18) and held it to the end to beat Sebastien Loeb by 7.9 seconds. While the fledgling Ogier did benefit from a cleaner road on the rally's first leg he was comfortably the quickest man, leading to Loeb admitting his rival was simply "unbeatable."

By winning his first World rally on merit up against the king of rallying at the time was a real statement of intent, particularly as Loeb's works Citroen team-mate Dani Sordo was over a minute behind the pair of them.

It wasn't long before Ogier displaced Sordo and was promoted from the junior team to the main works squad for the gravel rallies.

9 Rally Sweden 2015

In 2015, Ogier started the year off in perfect fashion with victory in Monte Carlo. Sweden was a tougher proposition as his Volkswagen Polo R WRC was the first car into the snow-covered forest stages, putting him at an obvious disadvantage.

But Ogier made it harder for himself as he chucked his Polo into a snowbank on Friday's final stage, losing 40s. Thierry Neuville and Ogier's VW team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen took centre stage as they squabbled for the lead but Ogier was closing in on the pair of them. With just one stage to go, Mikkelsen led by 3s over Ogier with Neuville another 1.6s in arrears. Ogier wound up the victor as Mikkelsen put his Polo into a snowbank on the final stage and lost over 40s like Ogier had two days earlier.

Sweden in 2015 was tense

The winner confessed: "I'm proud of this win because we really had to sweat blood and tears to get it. We decided on our strategy at the start of the rally: risk everything. It worked out well and now the points are in the bag."

GB 2018: Pushing

7 Wales Rally GB 2018

For four consecutive years, Ogier won Wales Rally GB but with it held an obscene record of maintaining the lead of Britain's round of the World championship from 2013-17. As soon as he won the opening Gwydyr test in 2013, Ogier was heading the leaderboard in Wales right the way until the first pass of Myherin in 2017 when Elfyn Evans hit the front. In 2018 however, things were going less swimmingly for Ogier. A gearbox problem that lost him first and second gear dropped the Ford Fiesta WRC driver to eighth midway on Friday before a comeback ensued. After SS15 Ogier was up to second but victory looked to be Ott Tanak's, only for the radiator on Tanak's Toyota Yaris WRC to fail and hand Ogier the lead. In such a close title fight and having not won since Corsica six months earlier, this was a golden opportunity Ogier wasn't about to relinquish. Tanak's team-mate Jari-Matti Latvala took the challenge to Ogier and led after SS20, but two sublime passes over the Great Orme Llandudno stage from Ogier netted him a narrow but vital win. When the chips were down, Ogier delivered and duly went on to win his sixth world championship two rounds later.

Continued on page 24

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FEATURE

6 Rally Germany 2011

Ogier rocked the boat in 2011

The 2011 iteration of Rally Germany lives long in the memory for many reasons.

While Ogier's victory broke an unprecedented eight-year run from his Citroen team-mate Loeb – who at that point was the only man to have ever won the German round – this was also the rally where it became very clear that the Loeb and Ogier alliance at Citroen simply wasn't going to last. With Citroen top brass present in Trier, a 1-2 finish was perhaps more important than ever and after the first day Loeb and Ogier were 7.4s apart but over a minute clear of Ford's Mikko Hirvonen. Ogier was ordered to hold station behind Loeb, and wasn't happy about it.

He kept his foot down, forcing Loeb to do the same until fate intervened and Loeb punctured on Saturday's final stage, leaving Ogier clear to win by 39.8s. Ogier deserves credit for unsettling Loeb so much within his own team, and maybe this political explosion further convinced Ogier to join VW, which turned out to be an inspired career decision.

5 Jordan Rally 2011

Ogier had to work hard in Jordan

The Jordan Rally was only ever included in the WRC in 2008, 2010 and '11, but that third and final occasion was a truly epic encounter where Ogier proved his mettle against his now-team boss Jari-Matti Latvala.

The entire first leg of the rally was cancelled after all the teams' equipment arrived to service late due to the cargo ship hitting delays. However, when the contest did get under way, it was Ogier who was in control, leading Loeb by over 30s after the first day. But that was mainly because Ogier's rivals had decided to throttle back and obtain a better road position for the final day.

Ogier's tactic looked to be the right one after the first loop as he led Ford's Latvala by 18.9s, but the Finn found some blistering form on the second pass to move into a 0.5s lead with just the powerstage to go. Undeterred and undefeated with the momentum firmly against him, Ogier attacked the Baptism Site stage with a vengeance. While Ogier shared the stage win with Mikko Hirvonen, crucially he was 0.7s quicker than Latvala to snatch the rally win by 0.2s – a margin that stands today as the smallest ever winning margin in WRC history.

OGIER'S 50 WINS

2010	
Rally Portugal	
Rally Japan	
2011	
Rally Portugal	
Jordan Rally	
Acropolis Rally	
Rally Germany	
Rally France Alsace	
2013	
Rally Sweden	
Rally Mexico	
Rally Portugal	
Rally Sardinia	
Rally Finland	
Rally Australia	
Rally France Alsace	
Rally Spain	
Wales Rally GB	
2014	
Rally Monte Carlo	
Rally Mexico	
Rally Portugal	
Rally Sardinia	
Rally Poland	
Rally Australia	
Rally Spain	
Wales Rally GB	
2015	
Rally Monte Carlo	
Rally Sweden	
Rally Mexico	
Rally Sardinia	
Rally Poland	
Rally Germany	
Rally Australia	
Wales Rally GB	
2016	
Rally Monte Carlo	
Rally Sweden	
Rally Germany	
Rally Corsica	
Rally Spain	
Wales Rally GB	
2017	
Rally Monte Carlo	
Rally Portugal	
2018	
Rally Monte Carlo	
Rally Mexico	
Rally Corsica	
Wales Rally GB	
2019	
Rally Monte Carlo	
Rally Mexico	
Rally Turkey	
2020	
Rally Mexico	
Rally Monza	
2021	
Rally Monte Carlo	

4 Rally Monte Carlo 2021

The rally that sealed Ogier his 50th World Rally Championship win deserves its place in the top four such was the level of Ogier's performance in his Toyota Yaris WRC.

Fresh from reclaiming his world title from Ott Tanak in 2020 just six weeks earlier, Ogier did have another score to settle as he had been beaten to Monte Carlo victory 12 months earlier by Thierry Neuville. Now in his second season in a Toyota, Ogier was more comfortable with his machinery and came out fighting.

Initially hampered by brake issues, Ogier was restricted to fifth place but hit the front after four stages and began to ease into a rhythm, only for a front-left puncture to drop him back down again to third. Ogier's response was sublime. Munching 16s then 17.8s out of new leader Elfyn Evans and in the space of two stages, Ogier was back out front in two bites and held station to record a 32.6s victory over his team-mate. Evans admitted he simply couldn't find the same confidence as Ogier, who was prepared to hang it all on the line to take back his Monte crown in what was one of the most accomplished drives in the seven-time champion's illustrious career.

Unbeatable: Ogier was in a different league on 2021 Monte

3 Rally Sweden 2013

While non-Scandinavians winning in Sweden is no longer as rare as it once was, Ogier's 2013 victory was just the second time it had happened after Sebastien Loeb's success in 2004.

But, more pertinently, it was the Volkswagen team incarnation's first World Rally Championship win on just the Polo R's second ever event. It was the start of the all-conquering partnership.

The warning signs had been sent on the season-opening Rally Monte Carlo when Ogier stopped the clocks quicker than anybody else, but it was there for all to see in the snow of Sweden. Winning the first forest stage after the opening superspecial stage in the rally's host city of Karlstad moved Ogier into the lead and he began to pull away from there.

First Polo win was '13

Ogier said: "The feeling is better than I expected to be after just two races with the car. Every time I needed to push a bit more and make a time, I was able to do it."

2 Rally Monte Carlo 2019

For the third Monte in four years, Ogier found himself learning a new car as he traded the M-Sport squad for a return to Citroen.

A lot had been made about the C3 WRC's ill handling so it was going to be a challenging season, but Ogier was up for it and proved he would be a perennial threat with a startling performance on the Monte. In some respects this was a rally Thierry Neuville threw away as he was at the head of the field when he overshot a fast left-hander and had to handbrake his Hyundai around, losing precious seconds. That misdemeanour elevated Ogier into a 14s lead of the rally, but Neuville clearly wasn't going to give up.

Neuville kept nibbling away and was just 0.4s behind going into the rally's 16th and final stage. Ogier's task looked impossible as his C3 had developed a throttle problem that was hampering him and affecting his confidence.

It's that context that makes this victory so special. Against all odds, Ogier outpaced Neuville by 1.8s on that last stage to seal a slender 2.2s victory and firmly prove his dogged determination and class behind the wheel.

Not even throttle problems could stop Ogier winning

Ingrassia (l) and Ogier (r) celebrate the win and title

WRC RALLY WINNERS

WRC

POS	DRIVER	TOTAL
1	Sebastien Loeb	79
2	**Sebastien Ogier**	**50**
3	Marcus Gronholm	30
4	Carlos Sainz	26
5	Colin McRae	25
6	Tommi Makinen	24
7	Juha Kankkunen	23
8	Didier Auriol	20
9	Markku Alen	19
10=	Hannu Mikkola	18
10=	Jari-Matti Latvala	18

1 Rally France Alsace 2013

As the event that yielded Ogier his first World Rally Championship crown but also a rally that drew a stunning comeback drive, Rally France Alsace 2013 ranks at the top of MN's list of Ogier's victories.

Uniquely, the powerstage was the first stage of Rally France eight years ago as opposed to the final one so the third-quickest time on Thursday evening was enough for Ogier to put the title out of his rival's reach. Distracted by achieving his goal, Ogier's Volkswagen was left behind on Friday as Thierry Neuville, Dani Sordo, Jari-Matti Latvala and Sebastien Loeb duked it out for the lead.

However Ogier responded masterfully on Saturday, winning five of the day's seven tests to head into Sunday third, 1.5s behind Latvala and 1.1s adrift of Sordo with Loeb just 3.5s back from Ogier. The new World champion destroyed them all on Sunday morning to carve open a 13.7s advantage after three of the leg's stages, and he would eventually defeat Sordo's Citroen by 12.2s to record his seventh win of the season from 11 starts.

To prove the irresistible form Ogier had found, not even a puncture would stop him from winning the next round in Spain as he recovered a 46s deficit with six stages remaining to win there too.

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE

You've probably heard the one about the Chinese word for crisis containing a character meaning 'opportunity'. As with a lot of these sort of things, it's fictitious apparently. But it can't be denied nevertheless that good sometimes indeed comes from bad.

In 1997, thanks to a dispute over television coverage, there were in effect two Bathurst 1000 races. One with V8 Supercars; the other with mighty Super Tourers. And, for the latter, British Touring Car Championship royalty landed in force: including Alain Menu, Jason Plato, John Cleland, Matt Neal, Frank Biela, Tim Harvey, Rickard Rydell and Derek Warwick, plus even a Formula 1 champion in Alan Jones.

Our readers' Q&A guest this week Patrick Watts was there too, and YouTube has captured him in the top-10 qualifying run-off, attacking the roller coaster-like Mount Panorama circuit on a hot lap in his Peugeot 406, clipping apexes as walls flash by either side. The inimitable Murray Walker guiding us round the lap tells us that this is Watts' first time at the track. But you wouldn't know it.

And one should seize on any opportunity to watch Mount Panorama. You can watch the whole thing at youtube.com/watch?v=TFBLNQqu7D8 or by searching 'Patrick Watts @ Bathurst 1997'.

Graham Keilloh

Watts: Aussie visitor

TV GUIDE

USA's greatest motor race? Daytona is on Sunday

With coronavirus continuing to conflict the world, motorsport action is again thin on the ground this week. However, if you have an interest in American motorsport it's an exciting week.

That's because it's Daytona 500 week, and the first time to enjoy the NASCAR series in 2021. Action from the iconic race is shown on FreeSports on Monday (1000hrs-1355hrs).

Elsewhere, Sky Sports F1 is screening another marathon of F1 Classic Races episodes, this week with a Brazilian theme.

On Sunday, catch the 1984 (1200hrs-1245hrs), 1986 (1245hrs-1330hrs), 2003 (1330hrs-1545hrs), 2009 (1545hrs-1800hrs), 2008 (1930hrs-2130hrs) and, finally, the 2012 grands prix (2130hrs-2345hrs).

Luke Barry

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ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!

Lewis Clarke-Bull traipsed out into the woods at Brands Hatch to capture this beauty

Atmospheric Britcar shot from Sam Nudd

David Harbey's shot of the line-up ahead of the 1999 24 Hours of Daytona in Florida

Another from David Harbey: Craig Breen

NEXT WEEK OUT THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18 2021

**Correct at time of going to press*

THE STIG SPEAKS TO MN

Ben Collins takes his place in the readers' question and answer hotseat

ROCKINGHAM REFLECTIONS

Twenty years on since the UK went all oval

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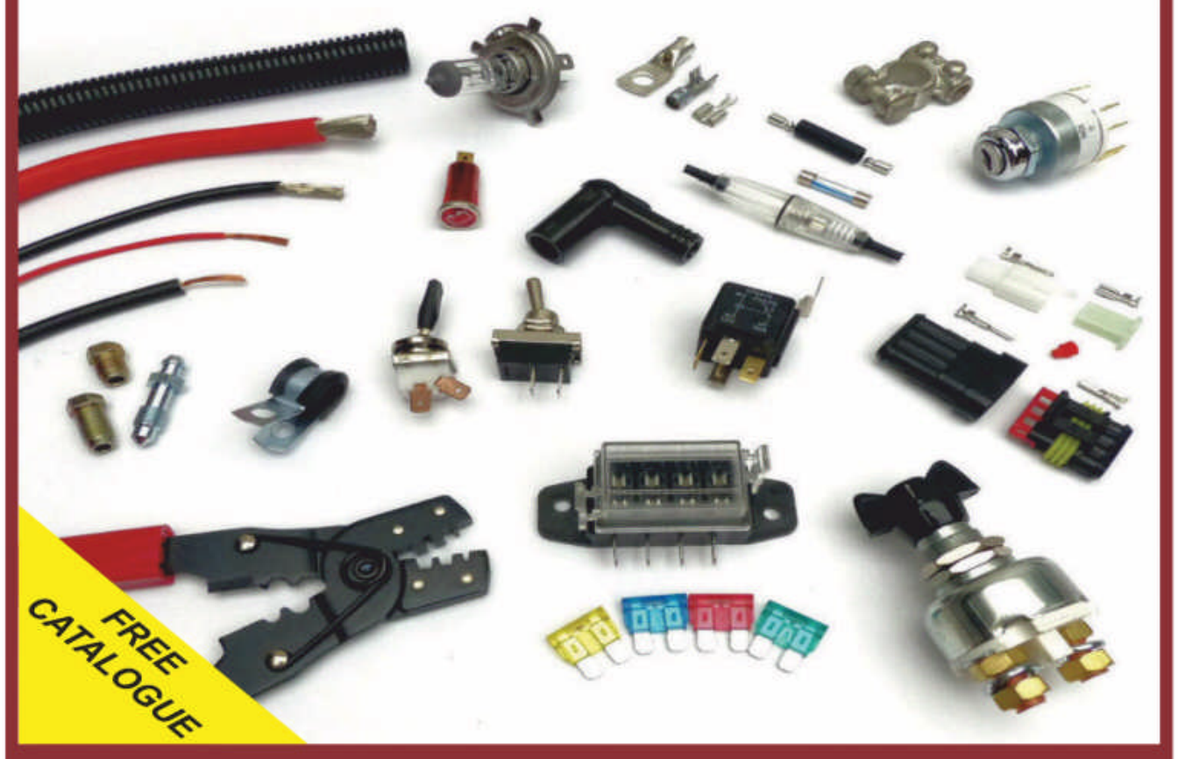

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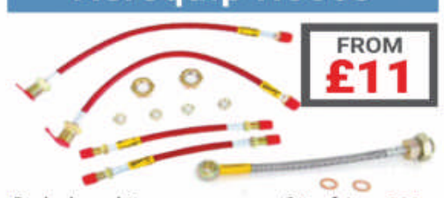

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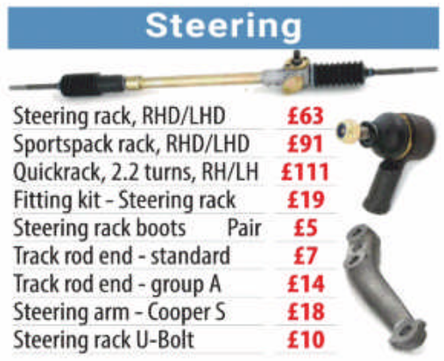

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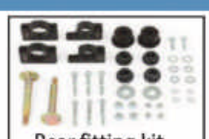

Rear fitting kit with trunnions

NOW ONLY £110

Genuine or non-genuine

Front From	£479
Rear - dry type From	£240
Rear - powder coated From	£260
Rear - hydrolastic From	£229

sale: everything reduced!

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Negative Camber Kit

KIT NOW **£111**

1.5° negative camber bottom arms, Group A adjustable tie rods and rear brackets

With Bushes **£117**

Rear Brackets

Negative camber & tracking rear brackets. Allows rear wheel alignment .

ONLY **£52**

Bottom Arms

FROM **£37**

1.5° negative arms	Pair	£37
2.0° negative arms	Pair	£54
Adjustable, heavy duty	Pair	£64
Adjustable rose jointed	Pair	£78
Adjustable rose jointed, heavy duty	Pair	£114
Standard bottom arm bush	Each	£2
Uprated bush set, nylon		£15
Bottom arm shaft	Each	£13
Standard bottom arms	Each	£39

Adjustable Tie Rods

Adjustable heavy duty	Pair	£32
Group 'A' adjustable	Pair	£56
Group 'A' rose jointed	Pair	£140
Standard tie rod	Each	£14
Tie rod bush, standard		£1
Tie rod bush set, uprated		£3

Suspension Parts

Top Arm (1 side)	£56
Top arm repair kit	£13
Radius arm - reconditioned (exchange)	£130
Radius arm Spindle and bush kit	£10
Knuckle joint	£4
Front shocker bottom mount	£8
Front shocker top mount	£13
Front shocker top mount - Competition	£24
Fitting kit stainless - Top Shocker mount	£5

Polyurethane Bushes

Polyurethene bushes available in Black or Red

Bump stop kit	Pair	£7
Engine steady		£6
Engine steady, ultimate		£5
Gearbox steady kits		£6
Front subframe upper kit		£8
Front subframe mount	Front	£4
Front subframe mount	Rear	£10
Rear subframe kit (early)		£7
Rear subframe kit (late)		£9
Full car kit (early)		£25
Full car kit (late)		£28
Lower arm bush kit		£6
Tie Rod bush kit		£5
Rebound buffer	Pair	£4

Body Panels

Replacement Panels	Magn	Gen
A panel Mk3 - RH/LH	£16	£23
A post hinge panel - RH/LH	£17	£28
Bonnet Mk2 on	£159	£186
Boot floor & battery box	-	£241
Boot floor rear repair	£28	-
Battery box	£28	£59
Door skin Mk3 on - RH/LH	£42	£92
Door step, shaped - RH/LH	£15	£89
Floor panel front to rear + sill RH/LH	£126	£290
Front floor well - RH/LH	£27	-
Front panel '76 on	£65	£197
Front panel to '76	£73	£197
Clubman front panel	-	£243
Front wing - early or late	£58	£105
Clubman front wing	-	£120
Pocket closing plate	-	£15
Rear floor well - RH/LH	£36	-
Rear valance all models	£19	£58
Rear valance closing assembly	£27	£40
Rear wheel arch	£63	£96
Scuttle screen lower complete	£49	£141
Seam cover front or rear From	£12	£18
Sill Inner repair - RH/LH	£17	-
Sill outer 4.5" Mk3 on - RH/LH	£19	£43
Sill outer 9" Mk3 on - RH/LH	£26	-

NEW MK1 Panels

Heritage approved, manufactured by Mini Sport

AVAILABLE AGAIN!

Pressed side and rear panels to exact original Mk1 Mini specifications

Left side panel 1-piece with B post	£1938
Right side panel 1-piece with B post	£1938
Rear panel 1-piece pressing	£921

Pressed from 1-piece of high grade steel

Body Shells

Largest stocks of Heritage bodyshells in the world. MK1, Mk4, SPi, MPi Sportspack & Clubman.

FROM ONLY **£8954**

Mk1 £12,549

Screens

Windscreens

Front		Rear	
Clear	£37	Mk2/3 clear	£111
Clear heated	£233	Mk1 clear	£142
Tinted	£45	Mk2/3 clear	
Tinted heated	£204	Heated	£192
Top tinted	£43	Mk1 clear heated	£228
Top tinted heated	£213		

Rubber Seals and Strips

Screen seal front	From £10		
Screen seal rear	£11	MK3 Door seal	£14
Chrome locking strip	£7	Mk3 door outer chrome	£19
Quarter light seals		Mk4 boot lid seal	£9
opening type	£8	Sill trim chrome deluxe	£13
Fixed type	£9	Roof gutter trim black	£11

Bumpers

From **£39**

O.E. spec		Overiders & Bars	
Stainless	£60	Mk1 kit	£143
Chrome From	£39	Mk1 kit & bumpers	£281
Stainless From	£44	Mk2 overiders kit	
Black	£48	From	£54

Mirrors

Stainless early	Each	£19
Black early	Each	£21
Black late	Pair	£35
Bullet early chrome	Each	£30
Bullet late chrome	Each	£32
Downton style	Each	£21
Cooper chrome	Each	£32
Cooper white	Pair	£50
Classic clip on	Each	£20
Early wing mounted	Pair From	£31

Brightwork

S/S Headlamp peaks	£10
S/S Headlamp stoneguards	£11
Mk3 chrome no. plate lamp	£21
S/S seam mouldings Pair	£26
Boot hinges - chrome	£12
Plain Door handle scoops	£7
Alloy dip stick: blue, red, silver	£9
Union Jack badge	£5
Cooper boot badge '96 on	£12
GB boot badge	£5
Cooper S Mk3 bonnet badge	£23
Standard locking fuel cap	£14
Monza style fuel cap	£25
Aston style fuel cap	£18
Cooper fuel cap	£36

Wipers

Kit: - arms, blades, washer jets, bezel kit & blanking plugs **NOW ONLY £36**

Stainless Steel

Wiper arm	Each	£6
Wiper blade	Each	£6
Wiper plug	Each	£4
Wiper bezel kit		£6

Washer Jets

Twin	£7
Single	£7

Grilles

ONLY **£61**

Cooper int release	£61
Cooper ext release	£55
Cooper lamp holes	£103
Mk 5 wavy int	£88
Mk 5 wavy ext	£88
Mk3 chrome	£85
Mk1 Austin wavy	£94
Mk1 Austin Cooper	£94
Mk1 Morris Cooper	£86
Mk1 mustache surr.	£100
Mustache ends Each	£12
Mk3 surrounds Each	£12
Mk3 top surround	£19
Grille buttons chrome or black	£10

ONLY **£103**

ONLY **£94**

ONLY **£88**

Internal bonnet release kit

ONLY **£31**

Load Liner

NOW ONLY **£52**

Light Systems

Quadoptic Headlamps

Quadoptic H4 Halogen Conversion

LHD Pair **£49**

RHD Pair **£42**

H4 Headlamp Assemblies, includes headlamp bowl plus inner bezel, suit LHD or RHD

Pre '97 Mini	From	£47
MPi Headlamp	From	£47
Headlamp leveling motor	'97 on	£44
Halogen crystal headlamp	Angel eye	£50
Headlamp adjuster kit		£4
Headlamp rim - chrome		£10
Headlamp bowl - plastic		£12

Works Lamp Bar Kit

Kit: Stainless lamp bar, wiring loom, 2 drive & 2 fog lamps

Lamp Bar **£61**

Full Kit **£157**

Historic Competition Parts

Roll Cages

RHD & LHD available

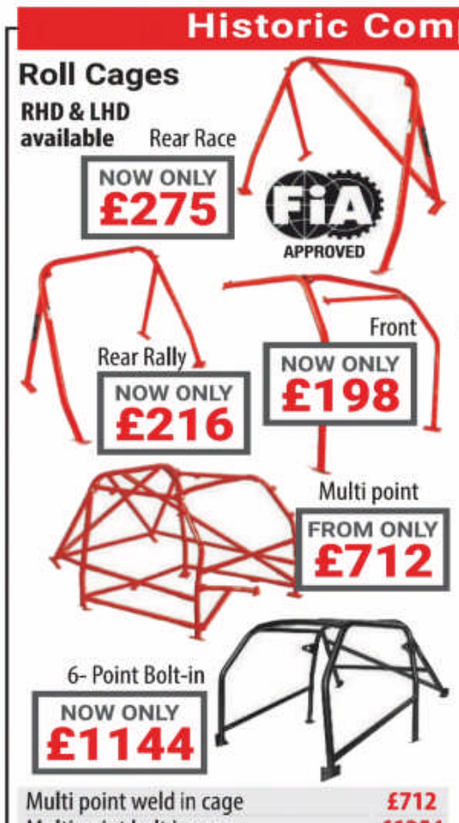
Rear Race NOW ONLY **£275**

Rear Rally NOW ONLY **£216**

Front NOW ONLY **£198**

Multi point FROM ONLY **£712**

6- Point Bolt-in NOW ONLY **£1144**



Multi point weld in cage	£712
Multi point bolt in cage	£1254
Door bars Pair	£124
Roll cage padding, 80cm	£10
Custom Cages Six Point Bolt-In	
Mini Roll Cage - Black	£1144

Sump Guards

Steel **Alloy or S/Steel**

Steel	£61	Alloy - with holes	£74
Extension	£51	S/Steel - with holes	£74
RAC dural	£105	Alloy - FLETCHER	£74
Monte Carlo	£87	S/Steel - FLETCHER	£74

Harnesses

securon

3 Point From	£37
4 Point From	£49

Black, Red or Blue

Sabelt

3 Point From	£87	3 Eyebolt & plate kit	£11
4 Point From	£85	4 Eyebolt & plate kit	£14

Fire Extinguishers

Full range available online	
AFFF Electrical kit	£707
AFFF Mechanical kit	£321
2.4 ltr AFFF Hand held	£89

Classic 10" Tyres

Blockley Classic	£76
Dunlop Weathermaster	£178
Dunlop Aquajet	£146
Avon CR6ZZ	£196
Yokohama A032	£64
Maxsport Hakka	£120
Maxsport RB1	£117

Safety Equipment

Battery master switch	£24
Battery cut out switch	£7
Pro map light	£33
Bonnet pin kit From	£7
Safety sticker sheet	£3
11" Door numbers	£1
Door squares	£4

Works Mini Parts

Headlamp Covers	£121
Reversing lamp	£156
Grille Cover	£92
Jacking point brackets	£50
Front splash guards	£99
Rear mudflaps	£121
Rear screen de-mist	£78
Crackle black dashboard	£79
Stopwatch panel From	£36

Spot Lights

Pair ONLY **£34**

Rally giant spot lamp kit	£43
Road runner H3 spot lamp kit	£22

Side Repeater

Clear type	£4
Amber type	£3

Indicators

Early - push fit amber plastic lamp unit	£7
Early - push fit clear plastic lamp unit	£7
Mk3/4 - clear lamp unit (screw type)	£7
Mk5 - clear lamp '97-'01	£10

Rear Lights & Lenses

Mk1 Rear lamp RH or LH	Each	£49
Mk1 Rear indicator lens RH or LH	Each	£7
Mk2/3 Rear lamp RH or LH	Each	£54
Mk2/3 Rear lens RH or LH	Each	£17
Mk2/3 Rubber seal RH or LH	Each	£7
Mk4 Rear lamp RH or LH	Each	£43

Clear Lenses
Supplied as pairs complete with orange and red bulbs, upper lenses only
NOW ONLY £13

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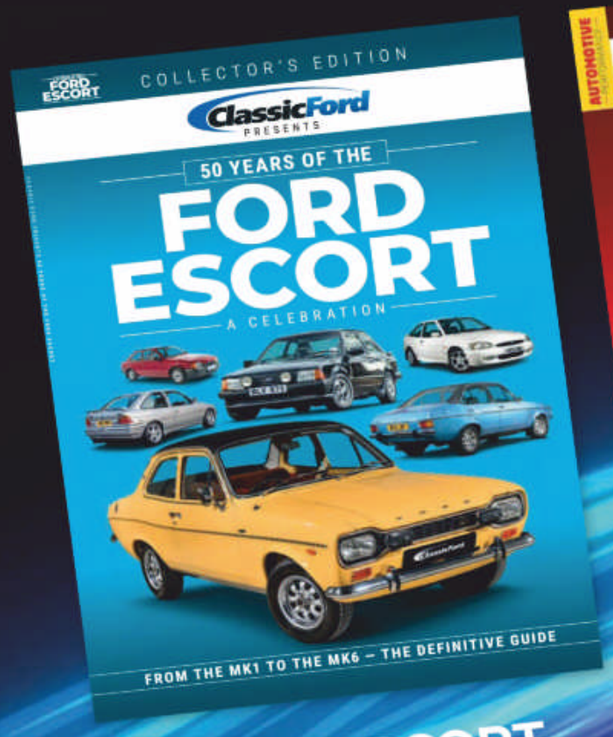

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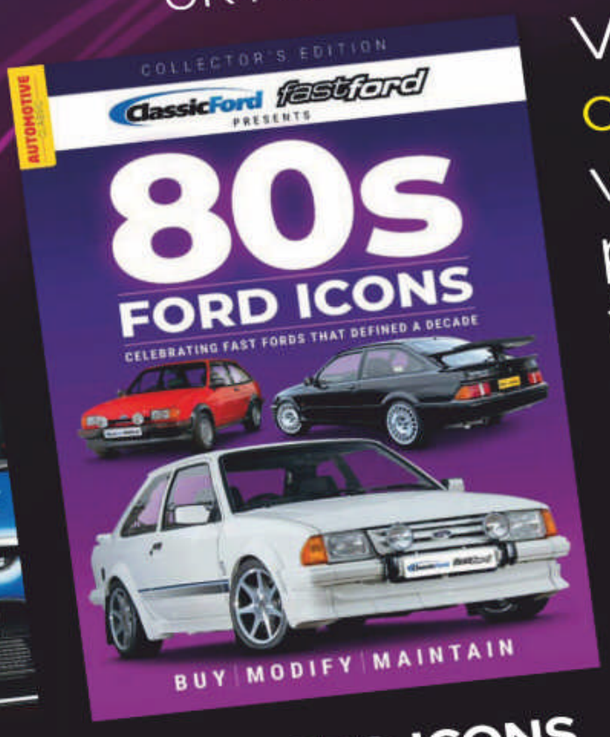

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